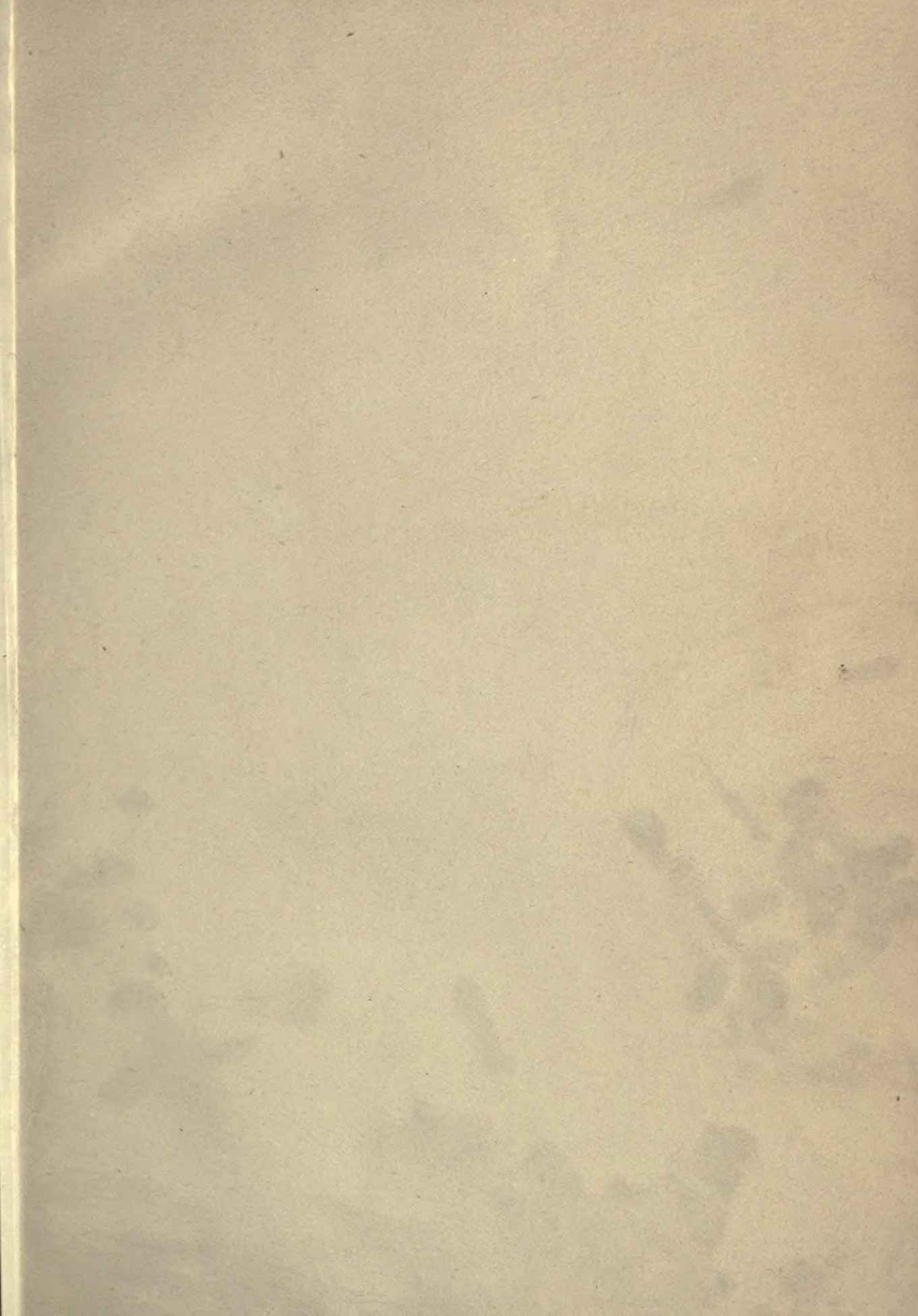





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AN ADDRESS OF BOLIVAR

AT THE
CONGRESS OF ANGOSTURA

(FEBRUARY 15, 1819)

Reprint ordered by the Government of the
United States of Venezuela, to Commemorate the Centennial
of the Opening of the Congress

(Translated from the Original Spanish by Francisco Javier Yánes)



PRESS OF
BYRON S. ADAMS
WASHINGTON, D. C.

476948
13.7.48

DECREE

AUTHORIZING THE PRESENT EDITION OF THE

ADDRESS OF BOLIVAR

AT THE CONGRESS OF ANGOSTURA

DOCTOR V. MÁRQUEZ BUSTILLOS

PROVISIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC

Whereas:

The 15th day of February, 1919, is the anniversary of the First Centenary of the meeting of the Second National Congress of Venezuela, known in history as the Congress of Angostura; and

Whereas:

The Congress of Angostura established the juridical status of the Revolution; reconstructed its international person, and in giving it the prestige of constitutional institutions, prepared at the same time for the expansion of its work of liberation in the South American continent; and

Whereas:

No document whatsoever can express more fully the scope of the task intrusted to the Congress of Angostura or the transcendental value of the ideas of the Liberator in calling it together, than the famous Address of the Liberator on the very day of its opening meeting;

Be it decreed:

Article 1. That a Spanish and an English edition of the Address of the Liberator on the opening of the Congress of Angostura be published as a part of the commemoration by the Government of the United States of Venezuela of the centennial anniversary of the illustrious Assembly.

Article 2. Each edition shall consist of five thousand copies and each is to contain a portrait of the Liberator; this present decree; a commentary on the political ideas of Bolivar and the importance of said Congress; a photographic reproduction of the building where the Assembly met, and a fac-simile reproduction of the copy of the *Correo del Orinoco* in which the beginning and the end of this historic document were printed for the first time.

Article 3. The expenses involved in the execution of this decree shall be defrayed by the National Treasury, as required by law.

Article 4. The present decree shall be countersigned by all the Ministers of the Executive, the Ministers of Interior Relations and of Finance being hereby intrusted with the execution thereof.

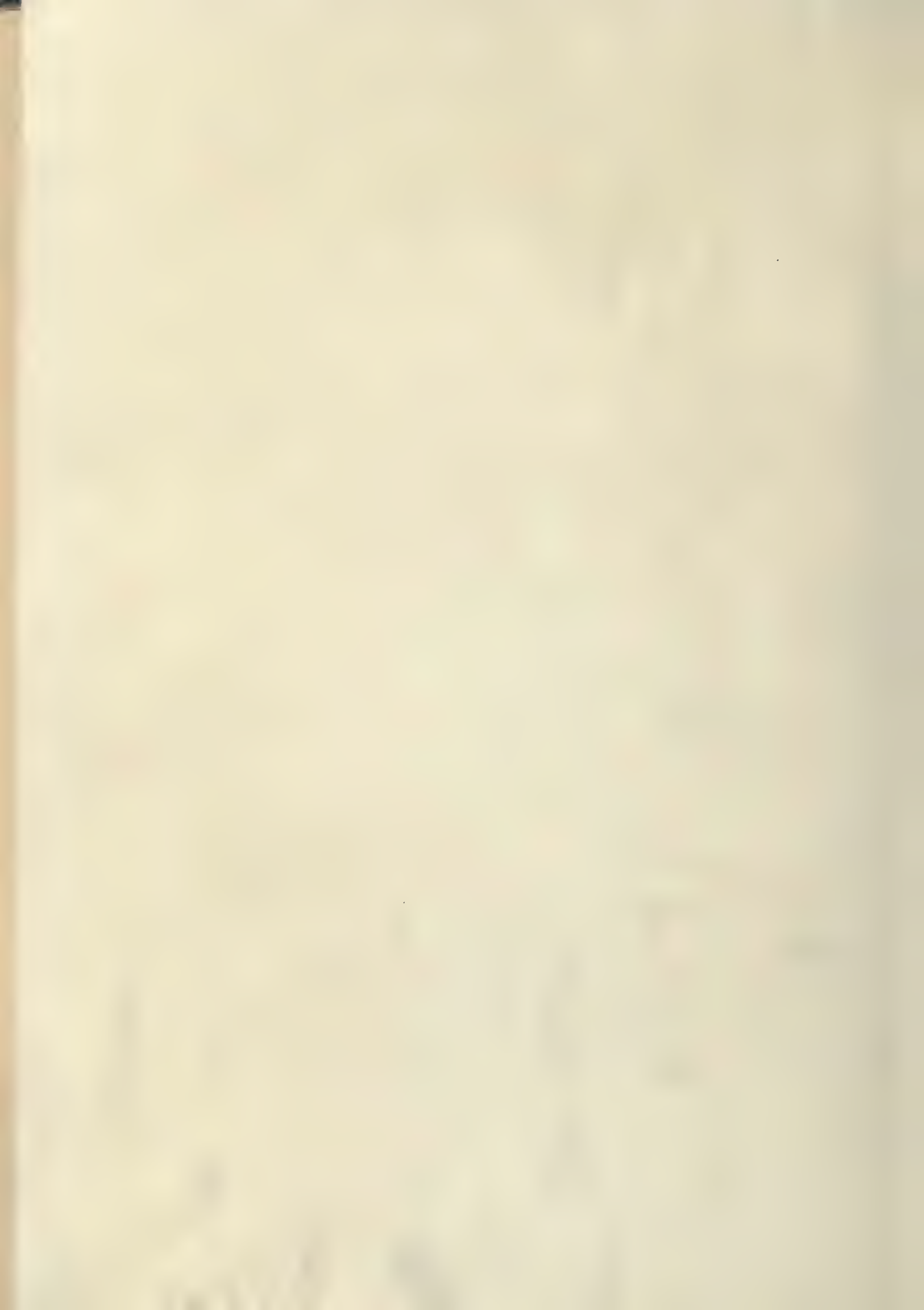
Given, signed and sealed with the Seal of the Federal Executive and countersigned by the Ministers of Interior Relations, Foreign Relations, Finance, War and Navy, Improvements, Public Works, and Public Instruction, in the Federal Palace at Caracas, on the nineteenth day of the month of December, of the year one thousand, nine hundred and eighteen, 109th of the Independence and 60th of the Federation.

V. MÁRQUEZ BUSTILLOS.

Countersigned:	
The Minister of Interior Relations,	IGNACIO ANDRADE.
Countersigned:	
The Minister of Foreign Relations,	B. MOSQUERA.
Countersigned:	
The Minister of Finance,	ROMÁN CÁRDENAS.
Countersigned:	
The Minister of War and Navy,	C. JIMÉNEZ REBOLLEDO.
Countersigned:	
The Minister of Improvements,	G. TORRES.
Countersigned:	
The Minister of Public Works,	LUIS VÉLEZ.
Countersigned:	
The Minister of Public Instruction,	R. GONZÁLEZ RINCONES.



BOLÍVAR IN 1819
BY THE RUMANIAN PAINTER, SAMYS MÜTZNER



THE POLITICAL IDEAS OF BOLIVAR

AT THE

CONGRESS OF ANGOSTURA

THE POLITICAL IDEAS OF BOLIVAR AT THE CONGRESS OF ANGOSTURA

From its earliest inception the Revolution of Venezuela tended unconsciously as well as instinctively, towards clearly defined ideas: absolute independence, a republican form of government, community of interests with all other countries and the closest touch with European culture.

Documents relating to the Revolution, both from Miranda and from the revolutionary leaders of 1797, 1808 and 1810, prove that the aims of the leading men capable of conceiving and achieving the political and economic transformation of the Colony, were more far-reaching than a mere change of authorities.

Scarcely free from the rule of the Captain General, the members of the Venezuelan Colony, although invoking, as a matter of form, the rights of Ferdinand VII, proceeded in fact to carry out substantial reforms in the political and economic life of the country. They broke away from old prejudices, opened up a new field to the aspirations of the popular classes, even encouraging and fostering their desires; they acted as if they felt thoroughly at home; they performed acts of sovereignty; they initiated Latin-American diplomacy by sending representatives to New Grenada, the United States and Great Britain, and gave evident proof, in the most solemn manner, of their sentiments of solidarity with the other Spanish colonies of America.

These facts, however, may be considered as not yet clothed with the prestige of Law. But the First Congress of Venezuela set its seal on the process by the well considered declaration of independence of Venezuela, and the Constitution of 1811, its immediate result, endowed the new born State with all the attributes of a regular government. A new

act was thus accomplished in the history of the Spanish Colonies in America. On the American Continent, besides the United States, there was now another constituted nation having the form and the essence of all Free States, such as separate and definite powers, citizens-rights, and an electoral system for securing the necessary change of the authorities. Thus the Republic of the United Provinces of Venezuela came into being.

The first Constitution of Venezuela was the expression of the mind of the men of letters in whom the thought and the spirit of the Revolution dwelt. An evidence of the genuineness of their intentions, it was a digest of the most beautiful principles of democratic doctrines, and in theory, a monument of political and social progress, which might have been deemed inconceivable in Spanish America. It was, however, the fruit of doctrinal speculation without the clarifying assistance of experience. Put to the test by subsequent events, it could not survive on the angry waves that the Revolution had stirred up in the heretofore almost dormant sea of the Colony. The rural and illiterate classes, having been called by rights and, above all in fact, to a decisive activity, while acting in accordance with their instinct and ignorance, far from being the foundation of the Republic, became the direct instrument of its destruction. The new democracy perished by the action of its own internal forces, rather than because of its enemies from without.

"A son of Caracas escaped from its ruins, physical and political" at Cartagena de Indias, with that clear vision which ever was the guiding star of his purpose, analyzed the causes of the crumbling down of his country, and looking ahead, just as he always did until his death, for the interests of America, he warned the other colonies which were on the road to emancipation, of the dangers to which the sad experience of Venezuela clearly pointed. That very same son of Caracas becoming later through the power of his genius the Armed Leader of the Revolution, patterned his political action on the counsel he had so clearly stated in his "*Manifest of Cartagena.*" While feeling the most profound respect for the ideal aspirations of a perfect democracy he did not lose sight for a moment of the well established fact that when idealization misses contact with reality, failure ensues, and what is much worse, the prestige of those very ideals is lost, for the success of which an ineffectual struggle has been waged.

Above all, he was always guided by the principle that anarchy does not lead to liberty; that the first condition of success lies in harmonious efforts, and that such a goal could not be reached except through a powerful authority, giving the Republic unity of will and unity of pur-

pose. Such was the political and military work of Bolivar from 1813 to 1819; to master the anarchical attempts of the idealistic patriots who overlooked reality, and to master the anarchical attempts of the patriotic leaders who sacrificed the ideals of the revolution to their personal viewpoint. Bolivar is the great Unifier, and when the task had been done, we find the idealists and men of action all united, those of the East with those of the South, the Center and the West. And when the Revolution had achieved the dream of unification, and all were agreed as to its final purpose, it was then, and only then, that Bolivar deems the time ripe to recommence—as a basis, and at the same time, as a sign of the normal era which the Republic was triumphantly approaching—the onward march of republican institutions, and thus convokes the Second Venezuelan Congress, which was to meet in the historic city of Angostura.

With all the authority obtained at the cost of numberless sacrifices, firm in his belief, justified by six years' experience, Bolivar expresses once more the same fundamental ideas of the *Manifesto of Cartagena* and the *Kingston Letter*. This is a decisive moment for the fate of the young nation. Was there to be a repetition of those errors springing from a generous spirit which had already proved to be incapable of protecting and fostering the onward march of the Revolution; or was the new era of regular government to rely on the wealth of experience gained through contrast, sacrifice and failure? It would have been an unpardonable mistake to fall a prey to the same disappointing illusions of the Republic's first legislators. Eight years of strenuous life in the midst of the hardships of a war which did not tolerate indifference nor remissness, had definitely enlisted in political and social activities the classes constituting the majority of the population of Venezuela. They had to be accepted with their good qualities, their defects, their potential energies, their natural limitations. The idea was to establish a republic, not philosophic and abstract, but a concrete democracy whose subjects and direct agents stood out clearly and precisely in that midst. This is the wide difference existing between the exalted Congress of Angostura and the exalted Congress of 1811.

At the opening of the Congress, Bolivar submits his report as to the exercise of the authority vested in him, which he surrenders to the Representatives of the People. Having thus become a plain citizen, exalted because of the services rendered by him to the country and by his experience in such service, he addresses those in whose hands rests the future of the Nation, and frankly asks of them all that he deems indispensable for the stability and happiness of Venezuela. He delves

into history to find that the success of a government does not lie so much in its extrinsic form as in its harmonious relations with the people to be guided and led. Thus, even in praising with sincere enthusiasm the excellent features of democracy, he does not fail to admit that democracy is not *per se* the only factor in the welfare of nations; this must be sought for in something more permanent and deep than the outward form of a system of government. His conception of a political ideal is condensed in this doctrine: "the most perfect system of government is that which gives the greatest possible sum of happiness, the greatest sum of social security, and the greatest sum of political stability." But it is not possible to attain these ends when the status of the men for whom legislation is made, has been disregarded. Thus, after making an ingenuous analysis of the population of Venezuela, pointing out its characteristics, Bolivar emphatically advises against the thoughtless copying of the institutions of other peoples, no matter how far advanced they be in the matter of pure doctrine, and demands original measures to meet the needs of the people of Venezuela. Stability is his great anxiety. He is personally aware of the manner in which authority is challenged by the individualistic instinct which is latent in every one, but which develops in a violent manner among those who having distinguished themselves because of their qualifications, audacity or success, feel that they are fit to grasp such authority and exercise it. Bolivar fears anarchy as much as he fears tyranny, and his earnest desire is to safeguard the State against either of these extremes. Hence the idea of a hereditary Senate, which in his own words "would be an intermediate power between the government and the people, that would blunt the shafts these two eternal rivals direct against each other." His entire system is inspired by the thought of the imperfections of the people and the risk there is in trusting them with instruments of government, by far too delicate for their uneducated, inexperienced hands. In everything Bolivar shows, besides the greatest appreciation for liberty as the acme of human aspirations, the fear, tempered by prudence, before the possibility that, in aiming at an impossible perfection, the effective benefits of a moderate and dignified freedom be sacrificed.

He desires, above all, as the foundation of public happiness, the formation of a national character, more effective than all the written laws. He proclaims union as the motto of the new born republic and urges "as the paramount care of the paternal love of Congress," popular education. As a statesman he believes that nothing stable can be

founded unless based on justice and righteousness, and exacts that morals be a part of the government of the people.

After earnestly requesting the adoption of these principles, Bolivar still finds new words, not merely to urge, but to beg for measures which are a consequence and crown of the great sacrifices he has undergone. "I leave to your sovereign decision the reform or abrogation of all my statutes and decrees; but I implore of you to confirm the absolute freedom of the slaves, as I would beg for my life and the life of the republic." This is conclusively national unification, which otherwise would not be understood; it is the application of moral principles, and a safeguard against contingencies and social cataclysms.

Finally, the Liberator asks Congress to sanction the grand political idea of the formation of a great state inspiring love and respect, with the necessary force to guarantee its own existence and to carry on its liberating action far beyond its frontiers.

The Congress of Angostura fulfilled in a large measure the dreams of Bolivar; it was worthy of the trust and discharged a historic mission. A gathering of tried and illustrious men, the Congress of Angostura was worthy the importance which the Revolution had assumed, and in creating the powerful and splendid republic of Colombia, it ceased to perform a Venezuelan task in order to fulfill an American mission.

After a century, the political ideas of Bolivar appear to be endowed with that eternal life found in all that is drawn from nature by a deep and sincere mind. Leaving aside all that which circumstances of the moment bring into the thoughts of every statesman, there yet remains, as a store of teachings justified by the history of one hundred years, a wealth of clear, consistent principles, still having the novelty and freshness of the most glowing political doctrines. It is towards the unity of national character, towards a just democracy, free from tyranny and Jacobinic exaggeration, towards the apotheosis of morals as the only possible basis of social redemption and stability; towards the abolition of slavery, the homogeneity of peoples and the effacement of caste; it is towards the community of continental interests, based on a harmonious conception of right, fraternity and respect among all the nations of America; it is towards all these ideals which might have appeared to be dreams without foundation, had they not been proclaimed by one who had already shown himself to be so capable in action as to secure the liberty of entire countries; it is towards these different goals that the peoples of America have been marching, some over wide, smooth, firm and safe roads, others through difficult paths, between falls and blows, among precipices and chasms. Before the

recent test to which humanity has seen civilization submitted, when it boasted of most admirable material progress, an awe-stricken world, its faith shattered, turns its eyes to that obsolete institution which under the name of Moral Power, Bolivar brought to light "from the depths of obscure antiquity."

Does it, perchance, differ from the Court of Nations which, due to the happy inspiration of President Wilson, is to precede the supreme reign of justice among all peoples? Bolivar himself thought that some day "his ingenuous dream," improved through experience and knowledge, might become most efficacious.

May the memory forever linger of that day in which a great citizen of the world, inspired by a great ideal, divested by his own volition of the unlimited power he had exercised, asked the representatives of the people, as the reward for his invaluable services, to deign to grant his country "a government preeminently popular, preeminently just, preeminently moral, which would hold in chains oppression, anarchy and guilt. A government which would allow righteousness, tolerance, peace to reign; a government which would cause equality and liberty to triumph under the protection of inexorable laws."

Caracas, February 15, 1919.

CORREO DEL ORINOCO.

N.º 19.

ANGOSTURA SABADO 20 DE FEBRERO DE 1819. 9º

TOM. II.

CORREO BRAZILENSE.

Continuacion de la Refutacion del Correo BrazileNSE.

Supongamos que el rey Juan fuese indiferente à esta peticion; y veamos qual seria la conducta de sus Consejeros y Ministros. Bien sabida es la de todos los que sirven estas plazas en Gobiernos despóticos; pero para demostrar la de los empleados de la Corte del Brazil alegaremos el dictamen del Correo BrazileNSE.

Confesa que hay abusos, principalmente en la forma de la administracion pública del Brazil—que son necesarias muchas reformas tanto en lo legislativo, como en la administrativo—y que las leyes del Brazil, quando era colonia y despoblada, no convienen al Brazil descolonizado, poblado, y rico.

Dice que los hombres buenos y espirituosos son los que el Gobierno debe contemplar y convencerlos de sus intenciones de mejoramiento en las cosas públicas: porque la gente ignorante va con la corriente, y los empleados y tituladores del Gobierno ó egoistas no cuidan del bien general: con tal que reciban su sueldo y coman y beban descansados, todo lo demas les es indiferente. Los que estan en poder y autoridad, luego quese les habla de reforma, temen perder sus comodidades, y de consiguiente llaman revolucion toda reforma, y jacobinismo toda demostracion de abuso. Perturbadores del sosiego público son llamados los que animados de patriotismo denuncian estos males: porque perturban la friccion de los malgranados placeres de estos egoistas. Son senencias del Correo BrazileNSE en el mismo número que estamos impugnando.

Y si los que han de proveer la peticion, son esos mismos empleados, egoistas, y aduladores del Gobierno, que aborrecen y detestan la reforma? ¿como podrá ella tener lugar? Mas claro: el Gobierno se compone de esos mismos empleados; ellos son los que gobiernan à nombre del rey, y los mas opuestos à toda reforma que desquicie su despotismo: ¿como pues esperar de ellos el suceso de la peticion? Si el rey fuese un hombre de virtud y talento extraordinario, tal vez provera contra el dictamen y voluntad de sus ministros y consultores; pero siendo tal, qual lo describio un papel Ingles despues de su emigracion al Brazil, nada de provecho podia esperarse de él. "Un hombre de escasos talentos, de un carácter debil é irresoluto, y enteramente entregado à sus favoritos. Asi está definido en....."
"A Sketch of the causes and consequences of the late emigration to the Brazil. By H. Ryland."

Ni la Filosofia, ni la revelacion pudieron enseñarle al Editor del Correo BrazileNSE que los hombres, creados à imagen y semejanza de Dios, debian depender de la voluntad, humor y passion de un individuo tal como el que está reinando en el Brazil. Y quando fuese mas sabio que Salomon, mas fuerte que Hercules, y mas virtuoso que Trajano, tampoco tendria derecho para mandar à su antojo, y sin las trabas de una Constitucion dictada por el pueblo, ó sus representantes. Toda autgria que no se derive de este principio, es ilegítima y tiránica. Todo Gobierno que no redunde en utilidad de los gobernados, debe ser abolido ó reformado. No se congregaron los hombres en sociedad para sacrificar sus derechos à

intereses à las comodidades y placeres de una sola persona ó familia; el mejor estar de todos los congregados, su salud y felicidad, fué la mira de su congregacion. Es un crimen de blasfemia el decir que Dios, variando posteriormente sus designios en la creacion del hombre, lo destinó al servicio y utilidad de cierto número de sus semejantes, abatiendolo à la clase de los brutos, y demas cosas que hacen la propiedad de los ricos y se transmiten à sus herederos. Estos son los efectos y estas las consecuencias de la falsa doctrina que hace derivar inmediatamente del Cielo el poder de su soberanía. Sobre esta falsa doctrina han girado los disparates que reproduce el Correo BrazileNSE, quando censura la revolucion de Pernambuco.

Adelantando su critica el escritor de este periódico, duda que hubiese elementos antiguos para esta empresa, y desde luego la llama obra del momento, parto de inconsideracion: se queja de la precipitacion, error, é injusticia de sus conductores; y los tacha de ignorantes en materias de Gobierno, administracion, y modo de conducir los negocios públicos; y no como quietos ignorantes, sino con una total ignorancia. Le contestaremos capítulo por capítulo.

Los antiguos elementos de toda revolucion tal como la de Pernambuco, no son otra cosa que los sentimientos naturales contra la opresion: el deseo innato de la libertad en el hombre es el resorte principal que da impulso à su maquina para recuperar sus derechos usurpados. Si estos nobles sentimientos no eran generales en todo el Brazil, al sistema de su Gobierno debe atribuirse esta mengua; al habito inveterado de las cadenas es imputable la indiferencia y apatia con que el pueblo las tolera, las bea, y las bendice. A esta degradacion brutal debio el despota el que la mayor parte de los habitantes de aquellas Provincias se hubiesen declarado contra la revolucion, ofreciendo en obsequio del tirano, con la mayor prontitud posible, sus personas y bienes. ¿Y de donde nace principalmente este embrutecimiento? De doctrinas tales como las del Correo BrazileNSE. Esta es la leche que maman quantos tienen la desgracia de nacer en monarquias tales como la de Portugal. A esta lactancia debe el Editor de aquel Correo la baxeza à que ha descendido su pluma, acusando à los Patriotas de Pernambuco, y tributando incienso à la Casa de Braganza.

De ella dice que es la mas popular que jamas gobierno à los Portugueses; que la revolucion de Pernambuco nada tenia de comun con el odio que se suponía contra la dinastia reinante: que en oposicion à los poquissimos facciosos que levantaron su descontento hasta el punto de rebelion, se podia alegar la inmensa mayoría, ó totalidad de los habitantes del Brazil que se declararon contra ellos, ofreciendo en defensa del rey sus personas y bienes con la mayor prontitud posible. Asi se explica en la pag. 210 del Correo de Febrero del año pasado, y así coopera à perpetuar la esclavitud de los BrazileNSE.

Que fuese obra del momento la revolucion, parto de la inconsideracion, del error, y de la precipitacion, tanto quiere decir en el concepto del escritor como revolucion no bien meditada ni combinada. Pero quisieramos que nos señalase en la historia de las revoluciones quales son las que han tenido buen éxito,

siempre que sus promotores han querido meditarlas y combinarlas del modo que pretende el Correo BrazileNSE. En la tarbanza han padecido todas las que se han preparado y madurado conforme al metodo que allí en su mente tenia concebido el Editor quando reprochaba la de Pernambuco. Todas las veces que se prolongado el tiempo de la erupcion para aumentar el número de adeptos y de medidas mas allá de lo que se acostumbra en semejantes empresas, todo se ha malogrado por las defeciones y pérdidas de alguno de los confidentes. Los hombres buenos y espirituosos son en todas partes los que conciben y forman las revoluciones, en todas partes son pocos los individuos de esta calidad; ellos son los que deben trazar y executar las operaciones insurreccionales contra el despotismo; el secreto de ellas no debe fiarse à la multitud; esta va con la corriente, y casi nunca deja de seguir el grito y alarma de sus confites.

Nos valemos de la misma razón que alega el Correo BrazileNSE para decir que los hombres buenos y espirituosos son los que debe contemplar el Gobierno y convencerlos de sus intenciones de mejoramiento en las cosas públicas, porque la gente ignorante va con la corriente. Casi todas las revoluciones empezadas por el rompimiento de muy pocos individuos, lease la del Duque de Braganza en Portugal, y se hallará comprobado el hecho; le de los Españoles contra Bonaparte fué iniciada por un puñado de gente en Madrid y por el grito de una vendedera; la de Venezuela contra las autoridades que se inclinaban à estar y pasar por las cesiones y abdicaciones de Bayona, no tuvo mas principio que el de un oficial que exclamó diciendo "Viva Fernando VII. y mueren los Franceses." La otra revolucion de Venezuela por su independencia y libertad fué obra de un número muy reducido de personas escogidas en la capital, y de muy pocas semanas de concierto; la de España en Mayo de 1808, y la de Caracas en Julio del mismo año fueron obra del momento y no premeditadas. Parto de inconsideracion, de error, y precipitacion era la de España en el juicio de Napoleon, y sus partidarios; y la de toda la América insurrecta le mereció el mismo concepto à Fernando, y sus servidores.

(Se continuará.)

LA MEDIACION

Conclusion de la Exposicion sobre la Mediacion entre la España y la América.

Si Fernando se revuelve à esta grande operacion politica, que puede costar dificultad al amor propio; pero no al del bien y de la Patria, se hallará de un solo paso transportado del siglo en que el vive al en que vive Europa, se dará à si mismo y à su nacion una nueva existencia y cambiará à un tiempo la faz de la Europa y del Mundo. — ¡Sombra de Henrique IV. vuela del Bearne antes que pase este rapido instante dado à tu Augusto Nieto para salvar ó para perder su trono y su país! — Eleva su imaginacion à la altura de tus ideas, muestrele la bnda de la gloria y del heroismo, hablele con el precio de un momento en que tan inmensos tesoros pueden evitarse y tan inmensos bienes adquirirse, y excitado en fin à adoptar las dos únicas medidas, de que depende la salud y el engrandecimiento de España — Gobierno representativo y alianza con América, ¿de qué otra cosa necesita ella para levantarse de este lecho de muerte y elevarse à un grado de poder y de prosperidad?

"Patria los beneficios de la libertad." Concluida su constitucion pidió permiso para retirarse, y el Presidente se lo concedió, nombrando una Diputacion de diez Miembros para que lo acompañase.

En seguida se trató en el Congreso de nombrar un Presidente interino de la Republica; pero ocurriendo muchas dificultades para la eleccion, se acordó que el General BOLIVAR ejerciese este Poder por 24 ó á lo mas por 48 horas, y se mandó una Diputacion á comunicar esta resolucion. El General contestó que solo por consideracion á la urgencia admitia el encargo, bajo la precisa condicion de que solo fuese por el término preficado.

Al siguiente dia, despues de largas discusiones, se reconoció necesariamente la absoluta necesidad de que en las actuales circunstancias continuase interinamente el General BOLIVAR en la Presidencia del Estado, y una Diputacion fué encargada de comunicarle esta determinacion, manifestandole las poderosas razones en que se fundaba. No obtuvo su consentimiento á la negativa, y se volvió á ejercer su oficio con su resistencia. Así lo verificó en el siguiente:

OFICIO DEL GENERAL SIMON BOLIVAR AL CONGRESO DE VENEZUELA.

Señor Secretario del Congreso!

En este instante me ha honrado el Congreso Soberano con una segunda Diputacion presidida por el honorable Señor General Urdaneta para anunciarme mi continuacion en la Presidencia del Estado. Yo estoy confuso, me hallo oprimido con el cúmulo de sentimientos de respeto, consideracion, y gratitud que me inspira la benevolencia del Soberano Congreso. Si no consultase mas que mi obediencia, y los votos de mi corazon volaria, como he sido invitado, á tomar posesion de la dignidad de Presidente de Venezuela; pero la conviccion en que estoy de ser incapaz de llenar debidamente las obligaciones de primer Magistrado, me fuerza á representar seriamente las justas razones que me impiden servir á la Republica en el Poder Ejecutivo.

Una dolorosa experiencia ha mostrado que incompatibles son las funciones de Magistrado, y de Defensor de la Republica: muchos reveses hemos sufrido por estar reunidos el Poder Militar y el Civil; pues que un hombre solo no puede atender á la conservacion de la paz, y al ejercicio de la guerra, y un hombre solo difícilmente reúne las virtudes y los talentos que requiere el Tribunal y el Campo. Ademas he reconocido en la práctica de los negocios públicos que mis fuerzas son insuficientes para soportar la formidable carga de un Estado Militar, y al mismo tiempo en la infancia. Los Representantes del Pueblo deben saber que apenas serian bastantes todas las facultades de todos nuestros Ciudadanos para componer un Gobierno reparador de tantas calamidades; ¿que podrá, pues, reparar un soldado?

El Soberano Congreso ha nombrado un Vice-Presidente para suplir mi ausencia de la Capital. Yo debo estar siempre, por mi estado, ausente de la residencia del Gobierno; por consiguiente este Vice-Presidente será siempre el primer Magistrado de la Nacion; y siendo tan acertada y sabia la eleccion que ha recaído en el honorable Representante Zeta, actual Presidente del Congreso, yo me atrevo á rogar á los Representantes del Pueblo, se dignen admitir la respetuosa renuncia que hago de la Presidencia del Estado.

Mi amor por la Patria y mi deseo por contribuir á la expulsion de los Tiranos de Venezuela me instan imperiosamente á representar lo que tengo el honor de comunicar á V.S.

"Dios guarde á V.S. muchos años.—Angostura á 16 de Febrero de 1819. 9.º.—BOLIVAR."

[Leido este Oficio en el Congreso, se suscitaron diversas discusiones, sobre que hubo largas discusiones, de la qual y del resultado se dará noticia al público por un Suplemento á esta Gaceta.]

RESPUESTA DEL SECRETARIO DEL CONGRESO AL GENERAL BOLIVAR.

Excmo. Señor: No habiendo el Soberano Congreso Nacional, accedido á las repetidas renunciaciones de la Presidencia interina del Estado que se confirió á V.E. en la Sesion Ordinaria de ayer, y confirmado este nombramiento, y el de Vice-Presidente del mismo en la persona del Señor Diputado FRANCISCO ANTONIO ZETA, por la de hoy haite que estos destinos sean constitucionalmente elegidos; y á consecuencia de la comunicacion que á V.E.

se hizo de esta deliberacion, pidiendo en el momento debido: ha acordado el Soberano Congreso se publiquen sus nombramientos: se haga un salvo de Arteria por ellos; y se mande iluminar generalmente esta Capital por la noche de este dia, y que el intento V.E. comunique sus respetuosos Ordenes á la Comandancia General.

"Tengo el honor de transmitirlo á V.E. de órden del Soberano Congreso.—Dios guarde á V.E. muchos años.—Palacio del Congreso en Angostura, 17 de Febrero de 1819. 9.º.—Excmo. Señor: Fiscal Secretario interino.—Diego Simón Urbán.—Excmo. Señor Presidente de la Republica."

DISCURSO Pronunciado por el General BOLIVAR al Congreso general de Venezuela en el acto de su Instalacion.—

Señor.—Dichoso el Ciudadano que bajo el escudo de las armas de su mundo ha convalidado la Soberania Nacional, para que ejerza su voluntad absoluta! Yo, pues, me cuento entre los seres mas favorecidos de la Divina Providencia, ya que he tenido el honor de reunir á los Representantes del Pueblo de Venezuela en este Augusto Congreso, fuente de la Autoridad legitima, depósito de la voluntad soberana y árbitro del Destino de la Nacion.

Al transmitir á los Representantes del Pueblo el Poder Supremo que se me habia confiado, como los votos de mi corazon, los de mis Conciudadanos y los de nuestras futuras generaciones, que todo lo esperan de vuestra sabiduria, rectitud, y prudencia: Quando cumplo con este deber, me liberto de la inmensa autoridad que me agobiaba como de la responsabilidad ilimitada que pesaba sobre mis débiles fuerzas. Solamente una necesidad forzosa unida á la voluntad imperiosa del Pueblo me habria sometido al terrible y peligroso encargo de Dictador Jefe Supremo de la Republica. Pero ya respiro aliviado de esta ansiedad, que con tanto riesgo, dificultad y cansancio he logrado mantener en medio de las tribulaciones mas horrosas que pueden afligir á un cuerpo social.

No ha sido la época de la Republica, que he presidido, una mera tempestad politica, ni una guerra sangrienta, ni una anarquia popular, ha sido, si, el desarrollo de todos los elementos desorganizadores: ha sido la inundacion de un torrente infernal que ha sumergido la tierra de Venezuela. Un hombre ¡y un hombre tierno yo! ¿que diques podria oponer al impetu de estas devastaciones? En medio de este piélago de angustias no he sido mas que un vil juguete del huracan revolucionario que me arrebataba como una débil paja. Yo no he podido hacer ni bien ni mal. Fuerzas irresistibles han dirigido la marcha de nuestros sucesos. Atribuirme los no seria justo, y seria darme una importancia que no merezco.

¿Quereis conocer los autores de los acontecimientos pasados y del órden actual? Consultad los anales de España, de América, de Venezuela: examinad las leyes de Indias, el regimen de los antiguos mandatarios, la influencia de la religion y del dominio extranjero: observad los primeros actos del Gobierno Republicano, la ferocidad de nuestros enemigos, y el carácter nacional. No me preguntéis sobre los efectos de estos trastornos para siempre lamentables, apenas se me puede suponer simple instrumento de los grandes móviles que han obrado sobre Venezuela. Sin embargo mi vida, mi conducta, todas mis acciones públicas y privadas están sujetas á la censura del pueblo.—Representantes! vosotros debéis juzgarlas. Yo someto la historia de mi mandato á vuestra imparcial decision, nada añadiré para excusarla: ya he dicho quanto puede hacer mi apologia. Si merezco vuestra aprobacion habré alcanzado el sublime título de buen Ciudadano, preferible para mí al de Libertador que me dió Venezuela, al de Pacificador que me dió Cundinamarca; y á los que el mundo entero puede darme.

Legisladores! Yo deposito en vuestras

manos el mando Supremo de Venezuela.—Vuestra es ahora el asunto de deber de castigaros á la felicidad de la Republica: en vuestra manos está la balanza de nuestros destinos, la medida de nuestra gloria: ellas sellarán los Decretos que figen nuestra Libertad. En este momento el Jefe Supremo de la Republica no es mas que un simple Ciudadano, y así quiere quedar hasta la muerte. Servirá sin embargo en la carrera de las armas mientras halla enemigos en Venezuela. Multitud de beneméritos hijos tiene la Patria capaces de dirigirla: talentos, virtudes, experiencia y quanto se requiere para mandar á hombres libres, son el patrimonio de muchos de los que aqui representan el Pueblo, y fuera de este Soberano Cuerpo se encuentran Ciudadanos que en todas épocas han mostrado valor para arrostrar los peligros, y prudencia para evitarlos, y el arte en fin de gobernar y de gobernar á otros. Estáis nuestros Barones merecerán, sin duda, los desagravos del Congreso y á ellos se encargará del Gobierno, que tan corajoso y sinceramente seabo de renunciar para siempre.

La continuacion de la autoridad en un mismo individuo frecuentemente ha sido el término de los Gobiernos Democraticos. Las repetidas elecciones son esenciales en los sistemas populares, por que nada es tan peligroso como dejar permanecer largo tiempo en un mismo Ciudadano el Poder. El Pueblo se acostumbraba á obedecerle, y él se acostumbraba á mandar, de donde se origina la usurpacion y la tirania. Un justo zelo es la garantia de la Libertad Republicana; y nuestros Ciudadanos deben temer con sobrada justicia que el mismo Magistrado, que los ha mandado mucho tiempo, los mande perpetuamente.

Ya, pues, que por este acto de mi adhesion á la Libertad de Venezuela puedo aspirar á la gloria de ser conatado entre sus mas felices amantes; permídmelo, Señor, que exponga con la franqueza de un verdadero Republicano mi respetuoso dictamen en este Proyecto de Constitucion, que me tomó la libertad de ofrecer en testimonio de la sinceridad y del candor de mis sentimientos. Como se trata de la salud de todos, me atrevo á creer que tengo derecho para ser oido por los Representantes del Pueblo. Yo sé muy bien que vuestra sabiduria no ha menester de consejos, y sé tambien que mi Proyecto acaso os parecerá erroneo, impracticable. Péro, Señor, aceptad con benignidad este trabajo, que mas bien es el tributo de mi sincera union al Congreso que el efecto de una leve van presuntuosa. Por otra parte, siendo vuestros funciones la creacion de un cuerpo politico, y aun se podria decir la creacion de una sociedad entera, rodeada de todos los inconvenientes que presenta una situacion la mas singular y difícil, quizás el grito de un Ciudadano puede advertir la presencia de un peligro oculto ó desconocido. (1.)

Legisladores! Por el Proyecto de Constitucion que reverentemente someto á vuestra sabiduria, observareis el espíritu que lo ha dictado. Al proponer la division de los Ciudadanos en activos y pasivos, he pretendido excitar la prosperidad nacional por las dos mas grandes palancas de la industria, el trabajo, y el saber. Estimulando estos dos poderosos resortes de la sociedad, se alcanza lo mas difícil entre los hombres, hacerlos honrados y felices. Poniendo restricciones justas y prudentes en las Asambleas Primarias y Electorales, ponemos el primer Dique á la licencia popular, evitando la concurrencia tumultuaria y ciza que en todos tiempos ha imprimido el desvario en las Elecciones, y ha ligado por consiguiente, el desacierto á los Magistrados, y á la marcha del Gobierno; pues este acto por consiguiente es el acto generativo de la Libertad, ó de la Esclavitud de un Pueblo.

Aumentando en la balanza de los poderes en

(1.) que en un escrito en el año de la Constitucion anterior de la Republica y del nuevo Proyecto se presenta. Se ha eruido convenientemente imprimido, y solamente el principio y fin del discurso (tanto que para imprimirse todo por separado.)

...había estado aspirar a su suya independencia? No es por cierto, la esteril dominación de un mundo; es su comercio lo que importa a la Nación y aun al Rey mismo. Y que comparación puede haber entre un nopolio miserable y ese mercado inmenso que a todos los pueblos y a ella principalmente abre la América independiente y libre? Situada a la estremidad de Europa, rodeada casi toda de puertos y favorecida del Cielo con un clima delicioso, un suelo fértil, excelente producciones, no pocas minas, y un pueblo sobrio, capaz de las mas altas empresas, y dotado de un carácter y de una constancia singular, solo le faltaba un Gobierno que hiciera valer tantas ventajas, y un comercio activo que reanimara las Artes y la Industria atargadas por su bárbaro sistema de exclusión y de intolerancia. Pero este comercio que debe darle el movimiento vital, en puede existir sino a favor de la amistad de América, y amada la mas íntima y la mas generosa. Es de toda evidencia que necesita por algunos años de concesiones liberales, y aun de ciertos privilegios para sostener la concurrencia con las naciones industriales en nuestros mercados. Véase ella que terminada por las armas la conquista entera de nuestra independencia, hemos de tener la estúpida consecuencia de perjudicarlos en nuestras relaciones comerciales para favorecer los adelantos de sus fábricas y manufacturas hasta que lleguen a competir con las mejores de Europa. — No, la América no hará sacrificios sino por una pronta paz, y una posesión anticipada pueda serle de compensación. Cada día que ella difiera el reconocimiento de la independencia absoluta de todo sus. Contiene, sin cuya condición preliminar jamás se firmara ningún tratado, es un nuevo obstáculo para obtener una paz ventajosa, y un gran paso hacia su perdición. Puroc imposible que el Gabinete de Fernando VII. dese de conocer la esencia del peligro, y se inicie remedio. GOBIERNO REPRESENTATIVO Y ALIANZA PRACTICAL CON AMÉRICA. En estos dos puntos estrechada todava política, y de otro depende su salud y el reposo de la Europa, a que nada sea tan inseguro como una revolución en España. La de Francia no habría sido mas que su sueño comparada con la de un pueblo no menos firme por la firmeza de su carácter, que por su ignorancia, su desesperación, y su fanatismo. He aquí el objeto verdaderamente digno de la Meditación de las Altas Potencias—initar a Fernando a proclamar un Gobierno Representativo y la Independencia de América, únicos medios de evitar en España una revolución, que no desearia de comunicarse a Francia y turbaria por largos años la tranquilidad de Europa y las relaciones del Mundo. Entonces obtendrán el título divino de bienhechores de la humanidad, lograrán asegurar la paz y la concordia universal, y merecerán el reconocimiento de todos los pueblos, los aplausos de su siglo, y las bendiciones de la posteridad.

ANGOSTURA 20 de FEBRERO de 1819.

INSTALACION DEL CONGRESO GENERAL DE VENEZUELA.

Reunidos los Diputados en esta Capital, y reunidas las Actas de Elección en una solemnidad el Reglamento, leído S.E. el Censo de la Nación para el 15 de octubre de 1811 del día de la Instalación del Congreso.

Una salva de Artillería al ponerse el Sol, y una iluminación general, anunció el 14 la solemnidad del día siguiente.

El 15 de mayo el Sol se hizo otra salva de Artillería. Los Diputados se reunieron a las diez y ocho en la Sala del Palacio del Gobierno destinada a sus sesiones, y el Estado-Mayor General, el Gobernador de la Plaza y Comandante general de la Provincia, Jefes y Oficiales de la casa del Gefe Supremo para acompañarle en tan augusta ceremonia. Tras comenzar a anunciar la marcha de la música, y los Diputados salieron a recibir a S.E. fuera de las puertas del Palacio. Un momento de silencio, que ocupó el primer momento de los honores militares.

El Señor Diputado de los Estados Unidos, B. INYNE, y uno de los COMERCIANTES INGLESES mas beneméritos de la Independencia, en representación de los demas, fueron convidados a este acto solemne, y colocados entre el Sr. Provisor, Gobernador del Obispado y los primeros Jefes militares. El concurso de extranjeros y de Ciudadanos fué muy numeroso.

El Gefe Supremo abrió la Sesion por la lectura de un Discurso tan lleno de interés y tan patético, que ni Ciudadanos ni Extranjeros pudieron contener las lágrimas.—Sesiones, su oración, la expresion de su semblante todo acreditaba la verdad de sus sentimientos, y su íntima adhesión a los principios filantrópicos y liberales de que hacia en aquel acto la mas patética y sublime profesion. El objeto principal de su Discurso era exponer los fundamentos de un Proyecto de Constitución, que S.E. presentaba al Congreso, y hacer ver que era la mas adaptada a nuestro pais. Las impresiones con que concluyó, declarando instalado el Congreso, y reconociendo en él la Soberanía Nacional, excitaron el nuestro entusiasmo, sobre todo quando empuñando la espada, dijo con una energía extraordinaria: *« Mi espada y las de mis milites compañeros de armas están siempre prontas a sostener a Augustus Amadís.— Viva el Congreso de Venezuela. »* A esta voz, repetida muchas veces por el concurso, se siguió una salva de Artillería.

El Gefe Supremo invitó entonces al Congreso a que procediese a la elección de un Presidente Interino, para entregarle el mando. Resultando electo a viva voz el Diputado FRANCISCO ANTONIO ZEA, S.E. le tomó el juramento sobre los Santos Evangelios, y lo siguió a todos Los Miembros uno a uno.— Concluido el juramento, S.E. cubió al Presidente en la silla que ocupaba el mismo baxo el velo, y dirigiéndose al cuerpo militar dijo: *« Señores Generales, Gefe y Oficiales, compañeros de armas, nosotros no somos más que simples Ciudadanos hasta que el Congreso Soberano se digne emplearnos en la causa y grado que él bien tenga. Contando con vuestra misión voy a darle en mi nombre y el vuestro las pruebas mas claras de nuestra obediencia, empuñándole el mandato que me estaba encargado. »* Diciendo esto se acercó al Presidente del Congreso, y presentándole su baston, continuó: *« Derivado a la República el baston de General que me es conferido para servirle qualquier grado ó en se a que el Congreso me destine, es para mi honor en él daré el ejemplo de la subordinación y de la ciega obediencia que deben distinguir a todo Soldado de la República. »* El Presidente dirigiéndose al Congreso dijo: *« Parece que no admite disension la confirmación de todos los grados y empleos conferidos por S.E. el General SIMON BOLIVAR durante su Gobierno: sin embargo pido para declararlo la aprobacion expresa del Congreso. »* Pareció al Congreso que los grados y empleos conferidos por S.E. el General SIMON BOLIVAR, siendo Gefe Supremo de la República, son confirmados. Todos los Diputados poniéndose de pie respondieron que si, y el Presidente reconfirmó: *« El Soberano Congreso de la República confirma, en la Persona de S.E. el Capitan-General SIMON BOLIVAR, todos los grados y empleos, conferidos por él mismo durante su Gobierno: y devolviéndole el baston, le dió asiento a su derecha. Después de algunos momentos de silencio, el Presidente habló en estos términos: — »*

Todos las Naciones y todas las Imperios: que en su infancia débiles y pequeñas, como el hombre mismo a quien deben su institucion, estas grandes Ciudades que todavia amanaban la imaginacion, Memphis, Palmira, Tebas, Alexandria, Tyro, la Capital misma de Belo y de Semirami, y ta tambien, soberbia Roma Señora de la tierra, no fuiste en las primeras cosas que una mezquina y miserable

No era en el Capitolio, no en los palacios de Agripa y de Trajano; era en una humilde choza, baxo un techo pagizo, que Romulo sencillamente vestido, trazaba la Capital del Mundo y ponía los fundamentos de su inmenso Imperio. Nada brillaba allí sino su genio; nada habia de grande sino él mismo. No es por el aparato ni la magnificencia de nuestra instalacion; sino por los inmensos medios que la Naturaleza nos ha proporcionado y por los inmensos planes que vosotros combierdes para aprovecharlos, que deberé calcular la grandeza y el poder futuro de nuestra República.—Esta misma senfite y el esplendor de ese grande acto de patriotismo de que el General BOLIVAR acaba de dar tan lustre y memorable ejemplo, imprime a esta solemnidad un carácter antiguo, que es un presagio de los altos destinos de nuestro pais. No Roma ni Atenas, Esparta misma en los heroicos dias de la heroicidad y las virtudes publicas, se presenta un escena mas sublime ni mas interesante. La imaginacion se exalta al confesarse, y se desvanecen los siglos y las distancias, y en otros tiempos nos creímos contemporáneos de los Arribides y los Phociones, de los Cicerones y los Platonidas. Las mismas silbistradas y los mismos principios liberales que han servido a los Gefe Rey y Monarca de la alta antigüedad, los mismos Emperadores Vespasiano, Tito y Trajano, Marco Aurelio, que los replantaron dignamente, colocan hoy entre ellos a este moderno General; y entre ellos obtendrá los honores de la historia y las bendiciones de la posteridad.— ¿Que es ahora que puede justamente apreciarse el tal valor de virtud patriótica de que hemos sido administrados mas bien que testigos. Quando nuestras Instituciones hayan recibido la sancion del Tiempo, quando todo lo débil y todo lo perecedero de nuestra edad, las pasiones, los intereses y las vanidades hayan desaparecido, y solo quedara los grandes hechos y los grandes hombres, entonces se hará a la abstraccion del General BOLIVAR toda la justicia que merece, y su nombre se pronunciará con orgullo y veneracion: y el Mundo con veneracion. Presajio de todo lo que él ha hecho por nuestra libertad: que así de angustia y peligro, el sacrificio de su vida y de sus riquezas, y de sus hijos, sus hijos, esfuerzos de que difícilmente se citará un ejemplo en la historia; que constancia en medio de todas las revacas, que firmeza, incuestionable para no desentender de la salud de la Patria, vengida subyugada, y el derrota y todo: precioso, digno, de tantos títulos, que tiene a la inmortalidad, para ser el monumento la atencion en lo que estamos viendo, y admirando. Si él hubiera renunciado la Autoridad Suprema quando esta no ofrecia mas que angustias y peores, quando atrahia sobre sí dilaciones y calamidades, y quando no era mas que un título al parecer vano, nada hubiera podido de laudable y mucho de ingrato; pero al contrario en el momento en que esta Autoridad se comprometia a tener algunos sacrificios de los ojos de la ambicion y quando todo parecia perdido, él con un dictado de modestia discreto, y haciendo de él propio movimiento y por el puro amor de la libertad, en una virtud tan heroica y tan eminente, que yo no sé si ha tenido modelo, y después de que tengo imitadores. Pero que si permitierdes nosotros que el General BOLIVAR se eleva tanto sobre sus Ciudadanos que los oprimia con su gloria, y no tratáremos a los mismos de competir con él en nobles y patrióticos sentimientos; me permitiréis dar el ejemplo de que él se ha despojado por mantener inviolable la libertad, siendo este precisamente el medio de aventurarlo.—No, no, repeto con energia la voluntad el General BOLIVAR, jamas, jamas consentiré a aceptar una Autoridad a que para siempre he renunciado de todo corazón por principios y por sentimientos. — Continúo exponiendo los peligros que corren la libertad, comencado por mucho tiempo un mismo hombre la misma Autoridad: manifestó la necesidad de precaverse contra las miras de algun ambicioso, y contra las de él mismo que no tenia ninguna seguridad de pensar y de obrar siempre del mismo modo, y terminó su Discurso protestando en él como mas fuerte y decidido, que en ningún caso se permitir una Autoridad, a que tan cordial y tan sinceramente habia renunciado por asegurar a su

meso del Congreso por el número de los Legisladores, y por la naturaleza del Senado, he procurado darle una base fija á este primer Cuerpo de la Nación, y revestirlo de una consideración importantísima para el exalto de sus funciones soberanas.

Separando con límites bien señalados la Jurisdicción Ejecutiva, de la Jurisdicción Legislativa, como he propuesto dividir sino enlazar con los vínculos de la armonía que nace de la Independencia, estas potestades Supremas cuyo choque prolongado jamás ha dejado de aterrar á uno de los contendientes. Cuando deseo atribuir al Ejecutivo una suma de facultades superior á la que antes gozaba, no he deseado autorizar un Despótico para que tiranice la República, sino impedir que el despotismo deliberante no sea la causa inmediata de un círculo de vicisitudes despoéticas en que alternativamente la anarquía sea reemplazada por la oligarquía, y por la monarquía. Al pedir la estabilidad de los Jueces, la creación de Jurados, y un nuevo Código, he pedido al Congreso la garantía de la Libertad Civil; la más preciosa, la más justa, y la más necesaria, en una palabra, la única Libertad, pues que sin ella ía demás son nulas. He pedido la corrección de los más lamentables abusos que entre nuestro Jucudatura, por su origen vicioso de este piñato, de Legislación Española, que semejante al tiempo recoge de todas las edades, y de todos los hombres, así las obras de la demencia como las del talento, así las producciones sensatas como las extravagantes, así los monumentos del ingenio como las del capricho. Esta Enciclopedia Judicial—Monstruo de diez mil cabezas, que hasta ahora ha sido el azote de los pueblos Españoles, es el suplicio más referido que la colera del Cielo ha permitido descargar sobre este desdichado Imperio.

Mediando sobre el modo efectivo de renovar el carácter y las costumbres que la tiranía y la guerra nos han dado, me he sentido la aullada de invocar un Poder Moral, sacado del fondo de la obscura antigüedad, y de que las repuladas Leyes que raras veces, algún tiempo, la virtud entre los Griegos y Romanos, bien puede ser tenido por un cáncido delirio, mis no es imposible, y yo me lisongeo que no disminuirá enteramente un pensamiento que mejorado por la experiencia y las luces, puede llegar á ser muy eficaz.

Horrorizado de la divergencia que ha nacido y debe reinar entre nosotros por el escaso auxilio que caracteriza al Gobierno Federalista, he sido arrastrado á rogaros para que á lopez del Centralismo y la reunión de todos los Estados de Venezuela en una República, sola es indivisible. Esta medida, en mi opinión, urgente, vital, redentora, es de tal naturaleza, que, sin ella, el fruto de nuestra regeneración será la muerte.

Mi deber es, Legisladores, presentaros un cuadro pronto y fiel de mi Administración Política, Civil, y Militar, mas sería cansar demasiado vuestra importante atención, y privaros en este momento de un tiempo tan precioso como urgente. En consecuencia, los Secretarios de Estado darán cuenta al Congreso de sus diferentes Departamentos exhibiendo al mismo tiempo los Documentos y Archivos que sirven de ilustración para tomar un exacto conocimiento del estado real y positivo de la República.

Yo no os hablaría de los actos más notables de mi mundo, si estos no incumbiesen á la mayoría de los Venezolanos. Se trata, Señor, de las resoluciones más importantes de este último período. La atroz é impia esclavitud cubría con su negra mancha la tierra de Venezuela, y nuestro Cielo se hallaba regado de tempestuosas Nubes que amenazaban un diluvio de fuego. Yo imploré la protección del Dios de la Humanidad, y luego la Redención á través las tempestades. La esclavitud rompió sus grillos, y Venezuela se ve vistosa de nuestros hijos, de hijos agradecidos que han convertido los instrumentos de su cau-

tiverio en armas de Libertad. Si, los que antes eran Esclavos, ya son Libres: los que antes eran enemigos de una Madrastra, ya son Defensores de una Patria. Escarceros la Justicia, la necesidad, y la beneficencia de esta medida, es superfluo cuando vosotros sabéis la historia de los Helotas, de Espartaco, y de Hayti: cuando vosotros sabéis que no se puede ser Libre y Esclavo á la vez, sino violando á la vez las Leyes naturales, las Leyes políticas, y las Leyes civiles. Yo abandono á vuestra soberana decisión la reforma ó la revocación de todos mis Estatutos y Decretos; pero yo imploro la confirmación de la Libertad absoluta de los Esclavos, como implorara mi vida, y la vida de la República.

Representaros la historia Militar de Venezuela, sería recordaros la historia del heroísmo Republicano entre los Antiguos: sería decirnos que Venezuela ha entrado en el gran cuadro de los Sacrificios hechos sobre el Altar de la Libertad. Nada ha podido llenar los nobles pechos de nuestros generosos guerreros, sino los honores sublimes que he tributado á los bienhechores del género humano. No cambiando por el poder, ni por la fortuna, ni aun por la gloria, sino tan solo por la Libertad, títulos de Libertadores de la República, son sus dignos galardones. Yo, pues, fundando una sociedad sagrada con estos inclitos Barones, he instituido el Orden de los Libertadores de Venezuela—Legisladores! á vosotros pertenece las facultades de conceder honores y decoraciones, vuestro es el deber de ejercer este acto augusto de la gratitud nacional.

Hombres que se han desprendido de todos los gozes, de todos los bienes que antes poseían, como el producto de su virtud y talentos: hombres que han experimentado quanto es cruel en una guerra horrorosa, padeciendo las privaciones más dolorosas, y los tormentos más acerbos; hombres tan beneméritos de la Patria, han debido llamar la atención del Gobierno, en consecuencia he mandado recomendarlos con los bienes de la Nación. Si he contraído para con el Pueblo alguna especie de deuda, pido á sus Representantes oigan mi súplica como el premio de mi débiles servicios. Que el Congreso ordene la distribución de los Bienes Nacionales, conforme á la Ley que á nombre de la República he decretado á beneficio de los Militares Venezolanos.

Ya que por fin triunfos hemos logrado anonadar las hordas Españolas, desesperada la Corte de Madrid ha pretendido sorprender vanamente la conciencia de los magnánimos Soberanos que acaban de extirpar la usurpación y la tiranía en Europa, y debieron ser los protectores de la legitimidad, y de la Justicia de la Causa Americana. Incapaz de alcanzar con sus armas nuestra susdicha España á su política insidiosa: no pudiendo vencernos ha querido emplear sus artes suspicaces. Fernando se ha humillado hasta confesar que ha menester de la protección extranjera para retornarnos á su ignominioso yugo; á un yugo que todo poder es nulo para imponerlo. Convencida Venezuela de poseer las fuerzas suficientes para repeler á sus opresores, ha proclamado por el órgano del Gobierno, una alta valentía de combatir hasta espirar por defender su vida política; no solo contra la España, sino contra todos los hombres, si todos los hombres se hubiesen degradado tanto, que abrazasen la defensa de un Gobierno devorador, cuyos únicos móviles son una España exterminadora, y las llamas de la Inquisición. Un Gobierno que ya no quiere dominios, sino desiertos: Ciudades, sino ruinas; y vasallos, sino tumbas. La Declaración de la República de Venezuela es la Acta más gloriosa, más heroica, más digna de un Pueblo Libre; es la que con mayor satisfacción tengo el honor de ofrecer al Congreso ya sancionada por la expresión anátime del Pueblo Libre de Venezuela.

Desde la segunda época de la República nuestro Ejército carecía de elementos militares; siempre ha estado desarmado: siempre lo han

faltado municiones: siempre ha estado mal equipado. Ahora los Soldados Defensores de la Independencia no solamente están armados de la Justicia, sino tambien de la fuerza. Nuestras tropas pueden medirse con las más selectas de Europa, ya que no hay desigualdad en los medios destructores. Tan grandes ventajas las debemos á la liberalidad sin límites de algunos generosos extranjeros que han visto gemir la humanidad y sucumbir la causa de la razón, y no la han visto tranquilos espectadores, sino que han volado con sus protectores auxilios, y han prestado á la República quanto ella necesitaba para hacer triunfar sus principios filantrópicos. Estos amigos de la humanidad son los genios custodios de la América, y á ellos somos deudores de un eterno reconocimiento, como igualmente de un cumplimiento religioso, á las sagradas obligaciones que con ellos hemos contraído. La deuda Nacional, Legisladores, es el depósito de la fé, del honor, y de la gratitud de Venezuela. Respetada como la Arca Santa, que encierra no tanto los derechos de nuestros bienhechores, quanto la gloria de nuestra fidelidad. Perceamos primero, que quebrantar un empeño que ha salvado la Patria, y la vida de sus hijos.

La remisión de la Nueva Granada y Venezuela en un grande Estado, ha sido el voto unánime de los pueblos y Gobierno de estas Repúblicas. La suerte de la guerra ha verificado este enlace tan anhelado por todos los Colombianos, y de hecho estamos incorporados. Estos pueblos hermanos ya os han confiado sus intereses, sus derechos sus destinos. Al contemplar la reunión de esta inmensa comarca, mi alma se remonta á la eminencia que exige la perspectiva colosal, que ofrece un cuadro tan asombroso. Volando por entre las proximas edades, mi imaginación se fija en los siglos futuros, y observando desde allí, con admiración y pasmo, la prosperidad, el esplendor, la vida que ha recibido esta basta región, me siento arrebatado y me parece que ya la veo en el corazon del universo, extendiéndose sobre sus dilatadas costas entre esos oceanos que la naturaleza habia separado, y que nuestra Patria teme con prolongados y anchuros canales. Ya la veo servir de laz, de centro, de emporio á la familia humana. Ya la veo enviando á todos los recintos de la tierra los tesoros que abigan sus montañas de plata y de oro. Ya la veo distribuyendo por sus divinas plantas la salud y la vida á los hombres dolientes del antiguo universo. Ya la veo comunicando sus preciosos secretos á los sabios que ignoran que superior es la suma de las luces, á la suma de las riquezas, que le ha producido la naturaleza. Ya la veo sentada sobre el Trono de la libertad empufando el cetro de la Justicia, coronada por la Gloria, mostrar al mundo antiguo la magestad del mundo moderno.

Dignos, Legisladores, acoger con indulgencia, la profesión de mi conciencia política; los últimos votos de mi corazon, y los ruegos fervorosos que á nombre del pueblo me atrevo á dirigiros. Dignos conceder á Venezuela un Gobierno eminentemente popular, eminentemente justo, eminentemente moral, que encadene la opresión, la anarquía y la culpa. Un Gobierno que haga reinar la inocencia, la humanidad, y la paz. Un Gobierno que haga triunfar bajo el imperio de Leyes justas, y la igualdad y la libertad.

Señor, empezad vuestras funciones, yo he terminado las mías."

Ayer ha llegado á San Pablos el Coronel BONNAS que viene del Ejército de Apure del qual se separó el 9 del corriente. El ha participado verbalmente al Gobierno la completa derrota que sufrió un Detachamento enemigo de 600 hombres de Caballería que desimb Marillo á recoger ganado para la subsistencia de su ejército. Ademas añade otros detalles muy interesantes sobre la situación de nuestras Fuerzas y las del enemigo, que aconteciendo en la ribera del Aracua no puede moverse ni abandonar el grueso del ejército un cuerpo que no sea destruido por nuestras tropas que lo observan de cerca, impidiendole, sacar ningún partido, ni ventaja del pais, é interceptándole por la espalda todas sus comunicaciones. Guardaros por momento parte oportuna por escrito de tan lisonjeros noticias.

BOLIVAR'S ADDRESS

ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY THE LIBERATOR IN ANGOSTURA,
ON THE 15TH OF FEBRUARY, 1819, AT THE OPENING OF THE
SECOND NATIONAL CONGRESS OF VENEZUELA.

GENTLEMEN:

Happy is the citizen who under the protection of the army of his command has convoked National Sovereignty to exercise its absolute will! I, therefore, count myself among those most favored by Divine Providence since I have had the honor to gather the Representatives of the People of Venezuela in this August Congress, the source of legitimate authority, depository of sovereign will and the arbiter of the Destiny of the Nation.

In transferring to the Representatives of the People the Supreme Power with which I have been entrusted, I fulfill the wishes of my own heart, those of my fellow citizens and those of our future generations which expect everything from your wisdom, uprightness and prudence. In discharging this sweet duty, I free myself from the overburdening of immense authority and the unlimited responsibility weighing upon my weak shoulders! Only a compelling necessity coupled with the commanding will of the People could have made me assume the tremendous and dangerous charge of *Dictator Supreme Chief of the Republic*. But I can breathe easier now in handing back to you that authority, which I have succeeded in maintaining with so much risk, difficulty and hardships amid the most awful tribulations that could ever afflict any social political body.

The epoch in the life of the Republic over which I have presided has not been a mere political storm; it has been neither a bloody war, nor yet one of popular anarchy. It has been indeed, the development of all disorganizing elements; it has been the flooding of an infernal torrent which has overwhelmed the land of Venezuela. A man, aye, such a man as I am, what check could he offer to the march of such devastation? In the midst of this sea of woes I have simply been a mere plaything of the revolutionary storm, which tossed me about like a frail straw. I could do neither good nor harm. Irresistible forces have directed the trend of our events. To attribute this to me would not be fair, it would be assuming an importance which I do not merit. Do you desire to know who are the authors of past events and the present order of things? Consult then the Annals of Spain, of America, of

Venezuela; examine the Laws of the Indies, the rule of the old executives; the influence of religion and of foreign domination; observe the first acts of the Republican Government, the ferocity of our enemies and our national temperament. Do not ask me what are the effects of such mishaps, ever to be lamented. I can scarcely be accounted for but as a mere instrument of the great forces which have been at work in Venezuela. However, my life, my conduct, all my acts, both public and private, are subject to censure by the people. Representatives! You are to judge them. I submit the history of my tenure of office to your impartial decision; I shall not add one thing more to excuse it; I have already said all that could be my apology. If I deserve your approval, I have attained the sublime title of a good citizen, to me preferable to that of *Liberator*, given me by Venezuela, that of *Pacifigator*, which Cundinamarca accorded me, and all the titles that the whole world could bestow upon me.

Legislators! I deposit in your hands the supreme command of Venezuela. Yours is now the august duty of devoting yourselves to achieving the happiness of the Republic; you hold in your hands the scales of our destinies, the measure of our glory; your hands will seal the decrees insuring our Liberty. At this moment the Supreme Chief of the Republic is nothing but a plain citizen, and such he wishes to remain until death. I will serve, however, in the career of a soldier while there are enemies in Venezuela. The country has a multitude of most worthy sons capable of guiding her; talents, virtues, experience, and all that is required to direct free men, are the patrimony of many of those who are representing the people here; and outside of this Sovereign Body, there are citizens, who at all times have shown their courage in facing danger, prudence in avoiding it, and the art, in short, to govern themselves and of governing others. These illustrious men undoubtedly merit the vote of Congress, and they will be entrusted with the Government that I have just resigned so cordially and sincerely and forever.

The continuation of authority in the same person has frequently proved the undoing of democratic governments. Repeated elections are essential to the system of popular government, because there is nothing so dangerous as to suffer Power to be vested for a long time in one citizen. The people become accustomed to obeying him, and he becomes accustomed to commanding, hence the origin of usurpation and tyranny. A proper zeal is the guarantee of republican liberty, and our citizens must very justly fear that the same Magistrate who has governed them for a long time, may continue to rule them forever.

And, now that by this act of adherence to the Liberty of Venezuela, I can aspire to the glory of being counted among her most faithful lovers, permit me, Sirs, to state with the frankness of a true republican, my respectful opinion regarding the scope of this *Project of a Constitution*, which I take the liberty to submit, as a token of the sincerity and candor of my sentiments. As this is a question involving the welfare of all, I venture to believe that I have the right to be heard by the Representatives of the People. Well I know that in your wisdom you have no need of counsel; I am also aware that my *project* may perhaps appear to you erroneous and impracticable. But, Sirs, receive with benevolence this work which is a tribute of my sincere submission to Congress rather than the outcome of a presumptuous levity. On the other hand, your functions being the creation of a body politic, and, one might say, the creation of an entire community surrounded by all the difficulties offered by a situation—a most peculiar and difficult one—the voice of a citizen may perhaps point out a hidden or unknown danger.

By casting a glance over the past, we shall see what is the basic element of the Republic of Venezuela.

America, on becoming separated from the Spanish monarchy, found itself like the Roman Empire, when that enormous mass fell to pieces in the midst of the ancient world. Each dismembered portion formed then an independent nation in accordance with its situation or its interests, the difference being that those members established anew their former associations. We do not even preserve the vestiges of what once we were; we are not Europeans, we are not Indians, but an intermediate species between the aborigines and the Spaniards—Americans by birth and Europeans in right, we are placed in the dilemma of disputing with the natives our titles of possession and maintaining ourselves in the country where we were born, against the opposition of the invaders. Thus, ours is a most extraordinary and complicated case. Moreover, our part has always been a purely passive one; our political existence has always been null, and we find ourselves in greater difficulties in attaining our liberty than we ever had when we lived on a plane lower than servitude, because we had been robbed not only of liberty but also of active and domestic tyranny. Allow me to explain this paradox.

In an absolute régime, authorized power does not admit any limits. The will of the despot is the supreme law, arbitrarily executed by the subordinates who participate in the organized oppression according to the measure of the authority they enjoy.

They are intrusted with civil, political, military and religious functions; but in the last analysis, the Satraps of Persia are Persians, the Pashas of the Great Master are Turks, the Sultans of Tartary are Tartars. China does not send for her Mandarins to the land of Genghis-khan, her conqueror. America, on the contrary, received all from Spain, which had really deprived her of true enjoyment and exercise of active tyranny, by not permitting us to share in our own domestic affairs and interior administration. This deprivation had made it impossible for us to become acquainted with the course of public affairs; neither did we enjoy that personal consideration which the glamour of power inspires in the eyes of the multitude, so important in the great revolutions. I will say, in short, we were kept in estrangement, absent from the universe and all that relates to the science of government.

The people of America having been held under the triple yoke of ignorance, tyranny and vice, have not been in a position to acquire either knowledge, power or virtue. Disciples of such pernicious masters, the lessons we have received and the examples we have studied, are most destructive. We have been governed more by deception than by force, and we have been degraded more by vice than by superstition. Slavery is the offspring of Darkness; an ignorant people is a blind tool, turned to its own destruction; ambition and intrigue exploit the credulity and inexperience of men foreign to all political, economical or civil knowledge; mere illusions are accepted as reality, license is taken for liberty, treachery for patriotism, revenge for justice. Even as a sturdy blind man who, relying on the feeling of his own strength, walks along with the assurance of the most wideawake man and, striking against all kinds of obstacles, can not steady his steps.

A perverted people, should it attain its liberty, is bound to lose this very soon, because it would be useless to try to impress upon such people that happiness lies in the practice of righteousness; that the reign of law is more powerful than the reign of tyrants, who are more inflexible, and all ought to submit to the wholesome severity of the law; that good morals, and not force, are the pillars of the law and that the exercise of justice is the exercise of liberty. Thus, Legislators, your task is the more laborious because you are to deal with men misled by the illusions of error, and by civil incentives. Liberty, says Rousseau, is a succulent food, but difficult to digest. Our feeble fellow-citizens will have to strengthen their mind much before they will be ready to assimilate such wholesome nourishment. Their limbs made numb by their fetters, their eyesight weakened in the darkness of their dungeons and their forces wasted away through their foul servitude, will they

be capable of marching with a firm step towards the august temple of Liberty? Will they be capable of coming close to it, and admiring the light it sheds, and of breathing freely its pure air?

Consider well your decision, Legislators. Do not forget that you are about to lay the foundations of a new people, which may some day rise to the heights that Nature has marked out for it, provided you make those foundations proportionate to the lofty place which that people is to fill. If your selection be not made under the guidance of the Guardian Angel of Venezuela, who must inspire you with wisdom to choose the nature and form of government that you are to adopt for the welfare of the people; if you should fail in this, I warn you, the end of our venture would be slavery.

The annals of past ages display before you thousands of governments. Recall to mind the nations which have shone most highly on the earth and you will be grieved to see that almost the entire world has been, and still is, a victim of bad government. You will find many systems of governing men, but all are calculated to oppress them, and if the habit of seeing the human race, led by shepherds of peoples, did not dull the horror of such a revolting sight, we would be astonished to see our social species grazing on the surface of the globe, even as lowly herds destined to feed their cruel drivers.

Nature, in truth, endows us at birth with the instinctive desire for liberty; but whether because of negligence, or because of an inclination inherent in humanity, it remains still under the bonds imposed on it. And as we see it in such a state of debasement we seem to have reason to be persuaded that the majority of men hold as a truth the humiliating principle that it is harder to maintain the balance of liberty than to endure the weight of tyranny. Would to God that this principle, contrary to the morals of Nature, were false! Would to God that this principle were not sanctioned by the indolence of man as regards his most sacred rights!

Many ancient and modern nations have cast off oppression; but those which have been able to enjoy a few precious moments of liberty are most rare, as they soon relapsed into their old political vices; because it is the people more often than the government, that bring on tyranny. The habit of suffering domination makes them insensible to the charms of honor and national prosperity, and leads them to look with indolence upon the bliss of living in the midst of liberty, under the protection of laws framed by their own free will. The history of the world proclaims this awful truth!

Only democracy, in my opinion, is susceptible of absolute freedom.

But where is there a democratic government that has united at the same time power, prosperity and permanence? Have we not seen, on the contrary, aristocracy, monarchy rearing great and powerful empires for centuries and centuries? What government is there older than that of China? What republic has exceeded in duration that of Sparta, that of Venice? The Roman Empire, did it not conquer the world? Does not France count fourteen centuries of monarchy? Who is greater than England? These nations, however, have been, or still are, aristocracies and monarchies.

Notwithstanding such bitter reflections, I am filled with unbounded joy because of the great strides made by our republic since entering upon its noble career. Loving that which is most useful, animated by what is most just and aspiring to what is most perfect, Venezuela in separating from the Spanish Nation has recovered her independence, her freedom, her equality, her national sovereignty. In becoming a democratic republic, she proscribed monarchy, distinctions, nobility, franchises and privileges; she declared the rights of man, the liberty of action, of thought, of speech, of writing. These preeminently liberal acts will never be sufficiently admired for the sincerity by which they are inspired. The first Congress of Venezuela has impressed upon the annals of our legislation with indelible characters the majesty of the people, so fittingly expressed in the consummation of the social act best calculated to develop the happiness of a Nation.

I need to gather all my strength in order to feel with all the reverence of which I am capable, the supreme goodness embodied in this immortal Code of our rights and our laws! But how can I venture to say it! Shall I dare profane by my censure the sacred tablets of our laws? There are sentiments that no lover of liberty can hold within his breast; they overflow stirred by their own violence, and notwithstanding the efforts of the one harboring such sentiments, an irresistible force will disclose them. I am convinced that the Government of Venezuela must be changed, and while many illustrious citizens will feel as I do, not all possess the necessary boldness to stand publicly for the adoption of new principles. This consideration compels me to take the initiative in a matter of the gravest concern, although there is great audacity in my pretending to give advice to the Counsellors of the People.

The more I admire the excellence of the Federal Constitution of Venezuela, the more I am persuaded of the impossibility of its application in our State. And, in my opinion, it is a wonder that its model in North America may endure so successfully, and is not upset in the

presence of the first trouble or danger. Notwithstanding the fact that that people is a unique model of political virtues and moral education; notwithstanding that it has been cradled in liberty, that it has been reared in freedom and lives on pure liberty, I will say more, although in many respects that people is unique in the history of humanity, it is a prodigy, I repeat, that a system so weak and complicated as the federal system should have served to govern that people in circumstances as difficult and delicate as those which have existed. But, whatever the case may be, as regards the American Nation, I must say that nothing is further from my mind than to try to assimilate the conditions and character of two nations as different as the Anglo-American and the Spanish-American. Would it not be extremely difficult to apply to Spain the Code of political, civil and religious liberty of England? It would be even more difficult to adapt to Venezuela the laws of North America. Does not the *Spirit of Laws* state that they must be suited to the people for whom they are made; that it is a great coincidence when the laws of one nation suit another; that laws must bear relation to the physical features of a country, its climate, its soil, its situation, extension and manner of living of the people; that they must have reference to the degree of liberty that their constitution may be able to provide for the religion of the inhabitants, their inclinations, wealth, number, trade, customs and manners? Such is the Code that we should consult, not that of Washington!

The Venezuelan Constitution, notwithstanding the fact that the bases on which it rests have been taken from the most perfect constitution of its kind,—should we consider correctness of principles and the beneficent effect of its administration—differed essentially from the American Constitution in a cardinal point, and the most important without doubt. The Congress of Venezuela, like the American Congress, shares in some of the duties of the Executive Power. We, moreover, subdivide this power, having vested it in a collective body subject to the objection of making the life of the government a periodical one, suspending and dissolving it whenever their members separate. Our triumvirate lacks, one may say, unity, continuity and individual responsibility, is deprived of action at a given moment, of continued life, of real uniformity, and immediate responsibility, and a government that does not possess everything that constitutes its moral force, must be called incapable.

Although the faculties of the President of the United States are limited by excessive restrictions, he alone exercises by himself all the functions of government that the Constitution vests in him, and there

is no doubting that his administration must be more uniform, constant and truly his own than that of a power divided among several persons, which can be but a hideous composite. The judiciary power of Venezuela is similar to the American, indefinite in its duration, temporary and not for life, and enjoying all the independence appertaining to it.

The first Congress in its federal Constitution took into consideration the spirit of the Provinces rather than the solid idea of creating a republic indivisible and centralized. Our legislators in this instance yielded to the inconsiderate request of those provincials captivated by the dazzling appearance of the happiness of the American people, believing that the blessings they enjoy are solely due to the form of government and not to the character and habits of the citizens. In effect, the example given by the United States, because of their rare prosperity, was too enticing not to be followed. Who could resist the glorious attraction of the full and absolute enjoyment of sovereignty, independence, liberty? Who could resist the admiration inspired by an intelligent government which binds at the same time private and public rights, and forms by common consent the supreme law of individual choice? Who could resist the rule of a beneficent government that with an able, active and powerful hand directs always and everywhere all its activities towards social perfection, which is the sole end of human institutions?

But, no matter how flattering might appear and might be the effect of this splendid federal system, it was not feasible that Venezuelans could enjoy it of a sudden just after having cast off their fetters. We were not prepared for so much good; good as well as evil produces death when it is sudden and excessive. Our moral constitution had not attained yet the necessary consistency to reap the benefits of a government entirely representative and so exalted that it might be adopted to a republic of saintly men.

Representatives of the People! You have been called to confirm or suppress whatever you may deem worthy of being preserved, amended or rejected in our social compact. To your lot falls the correction of the work of our first legislators; I would fain say that it behooves you to cover a portion of the beauties found in our political code, because not every heart is so made as to love all beauties, nor can all eyes stand the heavenly light of perfection. The book of the Apostles, the doctrines of Jesus, the divine writings sent us by Providence to better mankind, so sublime, so holy, is a rain of fire in Constantinople, and Asia entire would be a fiery conflagration should such a book of peace be suddenly imposed as a code of religion, law and customs. Permit

me to call the attention of Congress to a matter which may be of vital importance. We must bear in mind that our population is not the people of Europe, not of North America, that it is rather a composite of Africa and America, which is an offspring of Europe. Spain herself ceases to be European on account of her African blood, her institutions and her temperament. It is impossible to point out with preciseness to what human family we belong. The greater portion of the natives has been annihilated, the European has mixed with the native American and the African, and this has mixed again with the Indian and the European. All having been born of the same mother, our parents, of different origin and blood, are foreigners, and all differ visibly in color of skin. This dissimilarity is a hindrance of the greatest importance.

The citizens of Venezuela all enjoy by the Constitution,—the interpreter of what Nature intended,—a perfect political equality. Even though this equality had not been a dogma in Athens, France and in America, we need to make it such, to correct the difference that apparently seems to exist. My opinion is, Legislators, that the fundamental principle of our system depends immediately and exclusively on equality being established and exercised in Venezuela. That men are all born with equal rights to the benefits of society, has been sanctioned by the majority of the learned; but it has also been sanctioned that not all men are equally capable of attaining every distinction; while all should practise virtue not all do practise it; all should be courageous and all are not courageous; all should possess talents and all do not possess them. Hence the real distinction existing among individuals of the most liberally established society. If the principle of political equality is generally acknowledged, that of physical or moral inequality is also recognized. Nature has made men unequal as regards genius, temperament, strength and characteristics. The laws correct that difference by giving man a place in society so that education, industry, service, virtue may give him a fictitious equality, properly called political and social equality. It is an eminently beneficent inspiration that of reuniting all classes in a State, where diversity multiplies in proportion to the propagation of the species. By this single step, cruel discord has been torn out by the roots. How much jealousy, rivalry and hatred has been thus avoided!

Having done our duty towards justice, towards humanity, let us do it now to politics, to society, by smoothing over the difficulties presented by a system so simple and natural, but so weak that the slightest obstacle will upset and ruin it. The diversity of origin requires to be handled with infinite firmness, with infinite delicate tact in order to deal with an heterogeneous society whose complicated mechanism will

become disjointed, divided, will dissolve at the slightest alteration. The most perfect system of government is that which produces the greatest sum of happiness possible, the greatest sum of social security and political stability. Through the laws enacted by the first Congress we have the right to expect that happiness be the lot of Venezuela, and through your laws we must hope that security and stability will perpetuate such happiness. It is for you to solve the problem. But how, after having broken all the chains of our former oppression, could we accomplish the marvelous task of preventing the remnants of our fetters from being turned into liberticide weapons? The relics of Spanish domination will last a long time before we succeed in annihilating them; contagion of despotism has vitiated our atmosphere, and neither the fire of war nor yet the remedy of our wholesome laws has succeeded in purifying the air we breathe. Our hands are now free, while our hearts still suffer the ills of servitude. Man in losing his liberty,—Homer has said,—loses one-half of his manhood.

A republican government has been, is and must be that of Venezuela, based on the sovereignty of the people, the division of power, civil liberty, proscription of slavery, abolition of monarchy and privileges. We need equality to recast, so to speak, in a single mass the classes of men, political beliefs and public customs. Now, casting our eye over the vast field to be surveyed, let us fix our attention on the dangers to be avoided. Let History be our guide in this undertaking. Athens is the first to give us the most brilliant example of an absolute democracy, and at the same time Athens will offer the most melancholy example of the extreme weakness of such a system of government. The wisest among the legislators of Greece did not see his republic last ten years, and suffered the humiliation of having to acknowledge the inadequacy of absolute democracy to govern any form of society, even the most cultured, moderate and restrained, because it only shines with flashes of liberty. We must acknowledge, therefore, that Solon has undeceived the world and shown how difficult it is to govern men with mere laws.

The republic of Sparta, which appeared to be a chimerical invention, did produce more real results than the skilful work of Solon. Glory, virtues, morals, and therefore national happiness, were the result of Lycurgus' legislation. Although two kings to one State are two devouring monsters, Sparta had very little to complain of its double throne, while Athens confidently expected the most splendid future with an absolute sovereignty, free election of officials, frequently changed, and laws that were gentle, wise and politic. Pisistratus, a usurper and a

tyrant, did more good to Athens than her laws, and Pericles, although a usurper also, was the most useful citizen. The republic of Thebes did not live longer than Pelopides and Epaminondas, because at times men and not principles constitute a government. No matter how great the wisdom contained in codes, systems and statutes, they are a dead letter having but little influence in society; virtuous men, patriotic men, learned men make the republic.

The Roman constitution has given the greatest power and fortune to any one people in the world. It did not provide for an exact division of powers. The Consuls, the Senate, the people now were legislators, now executive officials, now judges; all participated in all the functions. The Executive, consisting of two Consuls, had the same difficulty as that of Sparta. Notwithstanding this shortcoming, the republic did not suffer the disastrous results, which all prevision might have thought unavoidable, of an Executive consisting of two officials having the same authority with the powers of a monarch. A government, the only inclination of which was conquest, did not seem destined to cement the happiness of the nation. A monstrous government, purely warlike, raised Rome to the highest state of virtue and glory and made of the earth a Roman domain as if to show man how far political virtue may lead, and how unimportant institutions may be.

And passing now from ancient to modern times, we find England and France attracting attention of all nations, and teaching them eloquent lessons of all sorts in the matter of government. The revolution of these two great peoples, like a brilliant meteor, has flooded the world with such a profusion of political light that now all thinking men have learned what are the rights of men, what are their duties, what constitutes the excellency of a government and what its vices. All know how to appreciate the intrinsic value of the speculative theories of modern philosophers and lawmakers. In fine, that star, in its luminous career, has even inflamed the heart of the apathetic Spaniards, who have also entered the political whirlwind, have made ephemeral attempts at liberty, have acknowledged their incapacity to live under the gentle rule of law, and have gone back to their immemorial dungeons and the stake.

This is the proper time, Legislators, to repeat what the eloquent Volney says in the dedication of his *Ruins of Palmyra*: "To the rising peoples of the Spanish Indies, to the generous men who lead them to liberty. May the errors and misfortunes of the Old World teach wisdom and happiness to the New World." Let us not lose, then, the benefit of the lessons drawn from experience, and may the schools of Greece,

Rome, France, England and America instruct us in the difficult science of creating and maintaining the nations under proper laws, just, legitimate and above all useful. We must never forget that the superiority of a government does not consist in its theories, or in its form, or in its mechanism, but in its being appropriate to the nature and character of the nation for which it has been instituted.

Rome and Great Britain are the two nations which have excelled most among ancient and modern peoples. Both were born to rule and to be free, but both were constituted not with dazzling forms of liberty, but built on solid foundations. Hence, I recommend you, Representatives, to study the British Constitution, which is the one that seems destined to do the most possible good to the peoples that adopt it. But no matter how perfect it may be, I am very far from suggesting a servile imitation. When I speak of the British Government, I only refer to whatever it has of the republican system; and truly, could we call a monarchy a system, that recognizes popular sovereignty, the division and balance of power, civil liberty and the liberty of conscience, the freedom of the press and everything which is sublime in politics? Could there be any more liberty in any republic whatsoever? And, could any more be said of social order? I recommend such constitution as the most worthy of being taken as a model by all who yearn for the enjoyment of the rights of men, and all political happiness compatible with our frail nature.

Our fundamental laws would not be altered in the least should we adopt a legislative power similar to the British Parliament. We have divided, as Americans did, national representation into two Chambers, the Representatives and the Senate. The first is very wisely constituted, enjoys all the functions appertaining to it, and is not susceptible of a radical reform, because it is the Constitution which gave it origin, form and such faculties as the will of the people deemed necessary to be legally and properly represented. If the Senate, instead of being elective were hereditary, it would be, in my opinion, the foundation, the binding tie, the very soul of our republic. This body would arrest the lightning of government in our political storms, and would break the popular waves. Attached to the government, because of its natural interest of self-preservation, it will always oppose the invasions attempted by the people against the jurisdiction and the authority of its rulers. We must confess it: the generality of men fail to recognize what their real interests are and constantly endeavor to assail them in the hands of their trustees; and the individual struggles against the masses, and the masses against the authorities. It is necessary, therefore, that a neutral body



A PANORAMIC VIEW OF ANGOSTURA, NOW CIUDAD BOLIVAR



THE BUILDING WHERE THE CONGRESS OF ANGOSTURA HELD ITS MEETINGS

should exist in every government, always siding with the aggrieved party to disarm the offender. This neutral body, to be such, must not owe its origin to the election of the government, nor to the election of the people, so as to enjoy a full measure of freedom, neither fearing nor expecting anything from either of these two sources of authority. The hereditary Senate, as a part of the people, shares in its interests, in its sentiments, in its spirit. For this reason it is not to be presumed that a hereditary Senate would disregard the popular interests or forget its legislative duties. The Roman Senators and the Lords of London have been the staunchest columns on which the structure of political and civil liberty has been erected.

These Senators would be elected by Congress the first time. The succession to the Senate should engage the first attention of the government, which would educate them in a college specially devoted to instructing these tutors, future legislators of the country. They should learn the arts, sciences and letters, the accomplishments of the mind of public men; from childhood they should know the career to which Providence has destined them, and from a tender age they should temper their soul to the dignity awaiting them.

The creation of a hereditary Senate would be in nowise a violation of political equality; I do not pretend to establish a nobility because, as a famous republican has said, it would be to destroy at the same time equality and liberty. It is a calling for which candidates must be prepared; it is an office requiring much knowledge and the proper means to become learned in it. Everything must not be left to chance and fortune in the elections; the people are more easily deceived than Nature perfected by art, and although it is true that these Senators would not spring from the womb of Perfection, it is also true that they would spring from the womb of a learned education. On the other hand, the liberators of Venezuela are entitled to hold, always, a high rank in the republic which owes its existence to them! I believe that posterity would grieve to see the effacement of the illustrious names of their first benefactors. I say, moreover, that it is a matter of public interest, of the gratitude of Venezuela, of national honor, to preserve with glory to the end of posterity a race of men of virtues, prudence and valor, who mastering all obstacles have founded the republic at the cost of the most heroic sacrifices. And if the people of Venezuela do not applaud the elevation of their benefactors, they are unworthy of being a free people, and never will be free.

A hereditary Senate, I repeat, will be the fundamental support of the Legislative Power and, therefore, the basis of the entire govern-

ment. It will equally serve to counterbalance both the government and the people; it will be an intermediate power that would blunt the shafts those two eternal rivals direct against each other. In all conflicts, the calm reasoning of a third party becomes the means of reconciliation; thus, the Senate of Venezuela will be the keystone of this structure so delicate and so liable to violent shocks; it would be the rainbow which calms the storms and maintains harmony between the members and the head of this political body.

Nothing whatever could corrupt a legislative body vested with the highest honors, self-dependent, having nothing to fear from the people, and nothing to expect from the government; having no other object than the repression of all elements of evil, and the fostering of all elements of good, and having the greatest interest in the existence of a society, in the good or bad results of which it must participate. It has been very justly said that the Upper House of England is invaluable to the nation because it is a bulwark to liberty, and I may add, that the Senate of Venezuela would be not only a bulwark to liberty but a support to make the republic everlasting.

The British Executive Power is clothed with all the sovereign authority devolving upon it, but it is also surrounded by a triple line of dikes, barriers and stockades. It is the Chief of the Government, but its Ministers and subordinates rely more on the laws than on its authority, because they are personally responsible, and not even the orders coming from the Royal Authorities could exempt them from such responsibility. It is the Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy; it makes peace and declares war, but it is Parliament that generally votes the sums to be paid to the military forces. If the courts and judges are dependent on it, the laws originate in Parliament which approves them. In order to neutralize this authority, the person of the King is inviolable and sacred, and while leaving the head free, the hands are bound. The Sovereign of England has three formidable rivals: his Cabinet, responsible to the people and Parliament; the Senate which defends the interests of the people as representatives of the nobility of which it consists, and the House of Commons, acting as the organ and mouthpiece of the British people. Moreover, as the judges are responsible for the proper application of the laws, they never deviate from them and the administrators of the Exchequer, being liable to prosecution not only for their own transgressions, but also for those of the government itself, guard most carefully against any malversation of the public moneys. No matter how the nature of the Executive Power of England is examined nothing can be found to lead to the

belief that it is not the most perfect model, whether for a kingdom, an aristocracy, or a democracy. Let us apply to Venezuela this sort of Executive Power in the person of a President appointed by the people or their representatives, and we would have taken a great step toward national happiness.

Whoever be the citizen discharging these functions he will be supported by the Constitution; being authorized to do good, he can not do harm, because whenever he is acting under the law, his Ministers will cooperate with him. If, on the other hand, he attempts to violate the law, his own Ministers would leave him isolated in the midst of the Republic, and may even impeach him before the Senate. The Ministers being responsible for any transgressions committed, they are the true governing powers, because they have to pay for their own misdeeds. Of no little advantage in the system is the obligation resting on the officials near the Executive Power to take great interest and a most active part in the deliberations of the government and to look on this department as if it were their own. It may happen that the President is not a man of great talents or great virtues, but notwithstanding the lack of these essential qualifications the President may perform his duties in a satisfactory manner, as in such cases the Ministry, doing all, bears the burden of the State.

However excessive the authority of the Executive Power of England may appear to be, it might not be excessive in the Republic of Venezuela. Here, Congress has bound the hands and even the head of the officials. This deliberative body has assumed a portion of the Executive functions, against the maxim of Montesquieu, that a representative body must not take any active resolution; it must make the laws and see whether the laws made are properly executed. Nothing is more contrary to harmony between powers than having them mix; nothing is more dangerous to the people than a weak Executive, and if in a Kingdom it has been deemed necessary to grant the Executive so many faculties, in a republic these faculties are much more indispensable.

Let us direct our attention to this difference, and we will find that the balance of power must be distributed in two ways. In republics the Executive must be the stronger, because everything conspires against it, while in monarchies the stronger must be the Legislative Power, because everything conspires in favor of the monarch. The veneration of peoples for Royalty is a fascination which has powerful influence in increasing the superstitious respect paid to its authority. The splendor of the throne, of the crown, of the purple, the formidable support of nobility, the immense wealth that whole generations accumulate under

the same dynasty, the fraternal protection that kings mutually receive, are very considerable advantages in favor of royal authority, making it almost unlimited. These very advantages are, therefore, those which must confirm the necessity of granting a republican Executive a greater authority than that possessed by a constitutional prince.

A republican Executive is a man isolated in the midst of a community, to restrain the impulse of the people towards license, the inclination of judges and administrators towards the abuse of the law. He is responsible to the Legislative body, the Senate and the people; he is one single man resisting the combined attack of the opinions, the interests and the passions of the social state, which, as Carnot has said, does nothing but continually struggle between the desire to dominate and that of getting away from domination. He is, in short, an athlete pitted against a multitude of athletes.

The only means to correct this weakness would be a well supported, well proportioned force against the resistance which the Legislative Power, the Judiciary and the People necessarily oppose to the Executive in a republic. If all the means that a just distribution of authority grants the Executive are not placed within its reach, it will necessarily become null or will misuse its own powers. I mean that it will be the death of the government, whose heirs are anarchy, usurpation and tyranny. It is sought to restrain executive authority with restrictions and obstacles; nothing is more just, but it must be borne in mind that the ties, the preservation of which is desired, must be strengthened, but not tightened.

Let us strengthen, then, the entire system of government, and see to it that the balance be established so that it will not break, and that its own sensitiveness be not a cause of decadence. As there is no form of government weaker than democracy, its structure must be built with great solidity, and its institutions carefully studied to insure stability. If it be not so, we must be sure that a trial government, and not a permanent system, is being established; we must reckon with an ungovernable, tumultuous and anarchical society, not with a social establishment where happiness, peace and justice hold sway.

Let us not be presumptuous, Legislators, let us be moderate in our pretensions. It is not likely that we should attain that which humanity has not succeeded in attaining, what the greatest and wisest nations never attained. Indefinite liberty, absolute democracy are the rocks upon which all republican hopes have been wrecked. Cast your eye over the ancient republics, the modern republics, the rising republics; almost all have tried to establish themselves as absolute democracies,

and almost all have failed in their just aspirations. They are praiseworthy, undoubtedly, who wish for legitimate institutions and social perfection! But, who has told men that they possess already all the wisdom, that they practice all the virtues uncompromisingly demanded by the union of power and justice. Only angels, not mere men, can exist free, peaceful, happy, while exercising all the sovereign power.

The people of Venezuela already enjoy the rights they can legitimately and easily enjoy. Let us moderate, now, the pressure of excessive pretensions, which the form of a government not suited to their needs might perhaps excite. Let us abandon the federal forms not suited to us; let us abandon the triumvirate of the Executive Power and center it in one President; let us grant him sufficient authority to enable him to struggle against the obstacles anent our recent condition, the state of war we are in, and the kind of foreign and domestic enemies against whom we will have to battle for a long time. Let the Legislative Power relinquish the functions belonging to the Executive and acquire, notwithstanding, a new consistency, a new influence in the balance of authority. Let the courts be strengthened by the stability and independence of the judges, the creation of juries, and civil and criminal codes not dictated by antiquity, nor by conquering kings, but by the voice of Nature, by the cry of Justice and by the genius of Wisdom.

My desire is that all parts of government and administration should require that degree of vigor that can only preserve the equilibrium, not among the members of the government itself, but among the different fractions of which our society consists. It would be of no importance that the springs of a political system become loose because of weakness, if this condition should not mean a general dissolution of the social body and the ruin of its members. The cries of humanity on the battlefields or in the mobs, clamor to Heaven against the inconsiderate and blind legislators who have thought that experiments with chimerical institutions can be made with impunity. All the peoples in the world have tried to attain liberty, some by the force of arms, others by framing laws, passing successively from anarchy to despotism, or from despotism to anarchy. There are very few who have been contented with moderate pretensions by constituting themselves in a manner more in keeping with their means, their minds and their circumstances. We do not attempt the impossible, lest by soaring above the region of liberty we might descend to the region of tyranny. From absolute liberty we always descend to absolute power, and the mean between these two extremes is supreme social liberty. Abstract theories produce the pernicious idea of unlimited freedom. Let us work to the end that the

public force be confined within the bounds that reason and interest demand; that national will be restrained to the limit marked out by a just power; that a civil and criminal legislation, analogous to our present constitution, have an absolute control over judicial power. Then that equilibrium will exist and there will be no classes to hinder the onward march of the State, and there will be no complications trampling up society instead of binding it together.

In order to form a stable government the basis is required of a national spirit, the object of which is a uniform tendency toward two capital points: to moderate the popular will, and to limit public authority. The terms which theoretically fix these two points are of difficult determination, but it can be well imagined that the rule which must govern is reciprocal restriction, in order to have the least friction possible between that will and legitimate authority. This science is unconsciously acquired through practice and study. Progress of education broadens the progress of practice, while uprightness of mind widens the progress of enlightenment.

Love of country, love of law, love of the authorities, are the noble passions which must have exclusive sway in a republican soul. The Venezuelans love their country, but do not love their laws, because these were noxious and the source of evil; nor could they love their authorities, because they were unjust, and the new authorities are scarcely known in their new calling. If there is not a holy respect for the country, the laws and the authorities, society becomes a disorder, an abyss; an individual conflict between man and man, and hand to hand.

In order to bring our rising republic out of this chaos, all our moral power will not be sufficient unless we cast the entire mass of the people in one single body, the composition of the government in one single body, legislation in one single body, and national spirit in one single body. Union, Union, Union, must be our motto. Our citizens are of different blood, let us mix it for the sake of union; our constitution has divided the powers, let us bind them together for the sake of union; our laws are sorry relics of all the ancient and modern despotisms; let us demolish such an awful structure. Let it fall, and discarding even its ruins let us create a temple to Justice, and under the auspices of its holy inspiration, let us frame a code of Venezuelan laws. If we wish to consult monuments and models of legislation, Great Britain, France, North America have admirable ones.

Popular education should be the paramount care of the paternal love of Congress. Morals and enlightenment are the poles of a republic; morals and enlightenment are our prime necessities. Let us take from

Athens her Areopagus, and the guardians of customs and laws; let us take from Rome her censors and domestic tribunals, and forming a holy alliance of those useful institutions, let us revive on earth the idea of a people which is not contented with being free and strong, but wants also to be virtuous. Let us take from Sparta her austere institutions, and forming with these three springs a fountain of virtues, let us give our republic a fourth power, having jurisdiction over childhood and the heart of men, public spirit, good customs and republican morals. Let us establish such an Areopagus to watch over the education of children, over national instruction, that it may purify whatever is corrupt in the republic; denounce ingratitude, selfishness, coldness of love for the country, idleness, negligence of the citizens; pass judgment upon the origin of corruption, and pernicious examples, applying moral penalties to correct breaches of custom,—just as afflictive punishment is applied to atone for a crime and not only whatever is repugnant to customs but that which weakens them as well; not only what may violate the Constitution, but also whatever should infringe on public respect. The jurisdiction of such court, a truly holy tribunal, should be effective with respect to education and instruction, and advisory only in what refers to penalties and punishment. Its annals or records, however, where its acts and deliberations are kept, the moral principles and the conduct of the citizens, shall be the books of virtue and vice; books that the people will consult for their elections, the executives for their decisions and the judges for their trials. Such an institution, no matter how chimerical it may appear, is infinitely more feasible than others which ancient and modern legislators have established, much less useful to human kind.

Legislators! The project of a Constitution which I most respectfully submit, will show you the spirit in which it was conceived. In suggesting the division of citizens into active and passive, I have tried to promote national prosperity through the two greatest levers of industry: work and knowledge. By stimulating these two great springs of society, the most difficult thing to make men honest and happy is attained. By just and prudent restrictions on primary and electoral assemblies, we place the first bar to popular license, avoiding tumultuous, blind gatherings which at all times have made blunders at elections. These blunders have extended to the executives and the government, because that all important act is the maker of either the liberty or the slavery of a people.

By increasing in the balance of powers the weight of Congress by the increase in the number of legislators, and the nature of the Senate,

I have endeavored to give a fixed basis for the first Body of the Nation and to clothe it with a dignity most important to the success of its sovereign functions.

In separating by means of well defined boundaries the jurisdiction of the executive from legislative jurisdiction, I have not endeavored to divide but to bind with the bonds of that harmony born of independence, such supreme authorities, whose prolonged clash has never failed to frighten one of the two contending parties. When I wish to vest the Executive with a number of duties beyond those formerly devolving upon it, it is not my desire to authorize a despot to tyrannize the Republic, but to prevent a deliberating despotism from becoming the immediate cause of a cycle of despotic vicissitudes in which anarchy will alternatively be replaced by oligarchy and by monocracy. In asking for the stability of judges, the creation of juries, and the new code, I ask Congress for the guarantee of civil liberty, the most priceless, the most just, the most necessary form of liberty, in a word the only kind of liberty, as without it, the others are void. I have requested the correction of the most lamentable abuses to which our judiciary is subjected, due to its defective origin as coming from that sea of Spanish legislation which, like time, gathers from all ages and men, whether the works of the insane or the works of the sane, whether the production of the wise or the productions of some extravagant mind, whether a monument of genius or a monument of fancy. This judiciary encyclopedia, a monster of ten thousand heads which has been until now the scourge of the Spanish peoples, is the most refined punishment the wrath of Heaven has permitted to descend upon this unfortunate empire.

While pondering over the effective means of regenerating the character and customs which tyranny and war have formed in us, I have dared to invent a *Moral Power*, drawn from the depths of obscure antiquity and from the now forgotten laws which for a time sustained public virtue among the Greeks and Romans. This may be an ingenuous dream, but not an impossibility, and I flatter myself that you will not altogether disdain a thought that, improved through experience and instruction, may become most efficacious.

Horrified at the separation that has prevailed and must prevail among us because of the subtle spirit that characterizes the federal government, I have been led to beg of you to adopt centralization and the union of all the States of Venezuela into a Republic, one and indivisible. This measure which in my opinion is urgent, vital, saving, is of such nature that without it death will be the fruit of our regeneration.

It is my duty, Legislators, to present before you a detailed and true

report of my political, civil and military administration, but this would overtax your valuable attention, and deprive you at this moment of a time as important as pressing. Therefore, the Secretaries of State will report to Congress on their respective departments, submitting at the same time the documents and records which will serve to illustrate and to give an exact idea of the real, positive condition of the Republic.

I would not mention to you the most notable acts of my administration, did they not concern the majority of the Venezuelans. I refer, Gentlemen, to the most important resolutions taken in this last period. Atrocious, godless slavery covered with its sable mantle the land of Venezuela and our skies were overcast with storm clouds threatening a deluge of fire. I implored the protection of the God of Humanity, and Redemption scattered the storm. Slavery broke its chains and Venezuela has found herself surrounded by her new children, grateful children who have turned their instruments of captivity into arms of liberty. Yea, those who were slaves are now free; those who were the enemies of their foster mother are now the defenders of a country. To emphasize the justice, the necessity, the beneficent results of this measure, is superfluous, when you know the history of the Helots, Spartacus and Haiti; when you know that one can not be free and enslaved at the same time, unless in violation of the laws of nature and the civil and political laws. I leave to your sovereign decision the reform or abrogation of all my statutes and decrees; but I implore of you the confirmation of the absolute freedom of the slaves, as I would beg for my life and the life of the Republic.

To mention the military history of Venezuela would be to remind you of the history of republican heroism among the ancients; it would be to tell you that Venezuela has been inscribed in the great roll of honor of the sacrifices made on the altar of liberty. Nothing could fill the noble breasts of our generous warriors, but the exalted honors paid to the benefactors of humanity.

Not fighting for power, nor yet for fortune, not even for glory but only for liberty, the title of Liberators of the Republic is their most fitting guerdon. I have, therefore, founded a sacred association of these illustrious men; I have created the Order of the Liberators of Venezuela. Legislators, the authority to confirm honors and decorations belongs to you; it is your duty to perform this august act of national gratitude.

Men who have given up all pleasures; all the comforts they enjoyed as the fruits of their virtues and talents; men who have undergone all that is cruel in a horrible war, suffered the most painful priva-

tions, and the bitterest torments; men so well deserving of the country, must attract the attention of the government, and in consequence I have directed that they be allowed a compensation out of the national wealth. If I have acquired any merit whatever before the eyes of the people, I ask the representatives of the people to grant my request as the reward of my feeble services. Let Congress direct the distribution of the national property in accordance with the law that in the name of the Republic I have decreed, for the benefit of the military men of Venezuela.

Now that after infinite victories we have succeeded in annihilating the Spanish hosts, the Court of Madrid in desperation has vainly endeavored to impose upon the mind of the magnanimous sovereigns who have just destroyed usurpation and tyranny in Europe, and must be the protectors of the legality and justice of the American cause. Being incapable of attaining our submission by force of arms, Spain has recourse to her insidious policy; being unable to conquer us, she has brought into play her devious artfulness. Ferdinand has humbled himself to the extent of confessing that he needs foreign protection to bring us back to his ignominious yoke, a yoke that there is no power which could impose on us! Venezuela, fully convinced of possessing sufficient strength to repel her oppressors, has made known by the voice of the government her final determination to fight to the death in defense of her political life, not only against Spain, but against all men, if all men had degraded themselves to the extent of espousing the defense of a devouring government whose only incentives are a death dealing sword and the flames of the inquisition. A government that wants not domains, but deserts, not cities but ruins, not vassals but graves. The Declaration of the Republic of Venezuela is the most glorious, most heroic, most worthy Act of a free people; it is the one that with the greatest satisfaction I have the honor to offer Congress, being already sanctioned by the unanimous will of the free people of Venezuela.

Since the second epoch of our Republic our army has lacked military elements; it has always lacked arms, it has always lacked ammunitions, has always been poorly equipped. Now the soldiers, defenders of our independence, are not only armed with justice, but also with force. Our troops can cope with the most select of Europe, since there is no inequality in the weapons of destruction. Such great advantages are due to the boundless liberality of some generous foreigners who have heard the groans of humanity, and have seen the Cause of Right yield. But they have not been mere spectators, they have rushed with

their generous help and have loaned the Republic everything that was needed for the triumph of its philanthropical principles. These friends of humanity are the guardian angels of America and to them we owe eternal gratitude, and the religious fulfillment of the sacred obligations we have contracted with them. The national debt, Legislators, is a sacred trust in the faith, the honor and the gratitude of Venezuela. Let it be respected like the Holy Ark, holding not only the rights of our benefactors, but the glory of our faithfulness. May we perish before we break a pledge which has saved the country and the life of her children.

The merging of New Granada and Venezuela into one Great State, has been the unanimous wish of the peoples and the government of both republics. The fortunes of war have effected this union so earnestly desired by all Colombians; in fact, we are incorporated. These sister countries have already entrusted to you their interests, their rights and their destinies. In contemplating the union of these countries my soul rises to the heights demanded by the colossal perspective of such a wonderful picture. Soaring among the coming ages my imagination rests on the future centuries, and seeing from afar with admiration and amazement the prosperity, the splendor and the life which have come to this vast region, I feel myself carried away, and I see her in the very heart of the universe, stretching along her lengthy shores between two oceans which Nature has separated, but which our country unites through long wide channels. I can see her as the bond, as the center, as the emporium of the human family. I can see her sending to all the corners of the globe the treasure hidden in her mountains of silver and gold; I see her sending broadcast, by means of her divine plants, health and life to the sufferers of the old world; I see her confiding her precious secrets to the learned who do not know how much her store of knowledge is superior to the store of wealth bestowed by Nature upon her; I can see her sitting on the throne of liberty, the scepter of justice in her hand, crowned by glory, showing the old world the majesty of the modern world.

Deign, Legislators, to accept with indulgence the profession of my political faith, the highest wishes of my heart and the fervent prayer which on behalf of the people I dare address you: Deign to grant to Venezuela a government preeminently popular, preeminently just, preeminently moral, which will hold in chains oppression, anarchy and guilt. A government which will allow righteousness, tolerance, peace to reign; a government which will cause equality and liberty to triumph under the protection of inexorable laws.

Gentlemen, commence your duties; I have finished mine.

SIMON BOLIVAR,

Presidente Interino de la República de Venezuela, Capitan-General de sus
Ejércitos y los de la Nueva-Granada, &c. &c. &c.

PROCLAMA.

Venezolanos!

EL Congreso general de Venezuela ha reasumido el Poder Soberano que antes me habiais confiado: yo lo he devuelto al Pueblo transmitiendolo á sus legítimos Representantes.

La Soberania Nacional me ha honrado nuevamente, encargandome el Poder Ejecutivo baxo el título de Presidente Interino de Venezuela.

Venezolanos!—Yo me siento incapaz de gobernaros: así lo he representado por muchas veces á vuestros Representantes, y á pesar de mis justas renunciaciones he sido forzado á mandaros.

Soldados del Ejército Libertador!—Mi única ambicion ha sido siempre la de participar con vosotros de los peligros que arrostrais por la Republica.

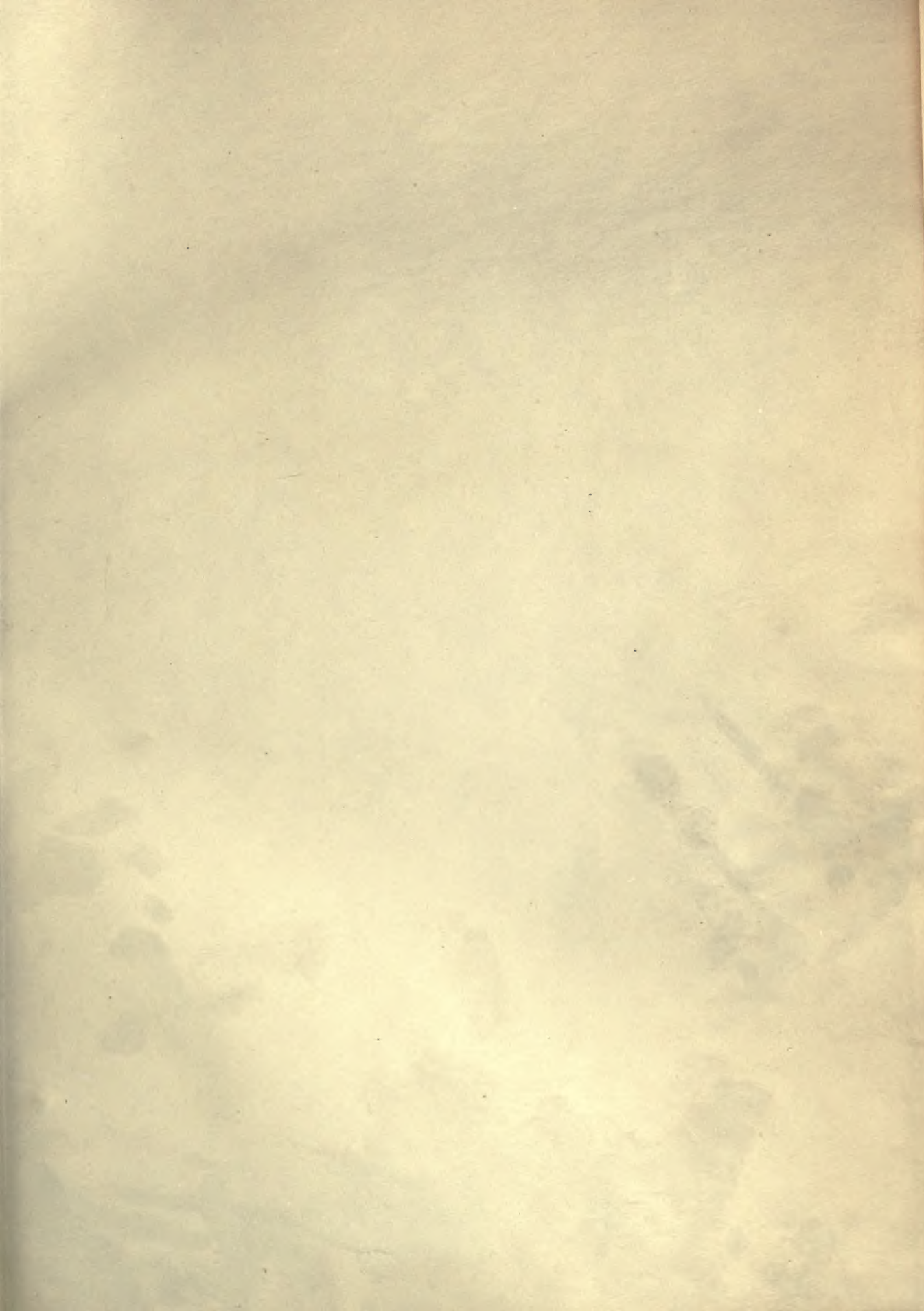
Ciudadanos!—Una Legion Británica, protectora de nuestra Libertad, ha llegado a Venezuela a ayudarnos á quebrantar nuestras cadenas: recibidla con la veneracion que inspira el heroismo benéfico. Abrid vuestros brazos á esos Extranjeros generosos que vienen á disputarnos los títulos de Libertadores de Venezuela.

Quartel-general de Angostura á 20 de Febrero de 1819.—9°

SIMON BOLIVAR.

Impreso por Andrés Roderick, Impresor del Gobierno.





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Bolívar, Simon

An address of Bolívar at the Congress of
Angostura....tr. by F.J. Yánes.

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